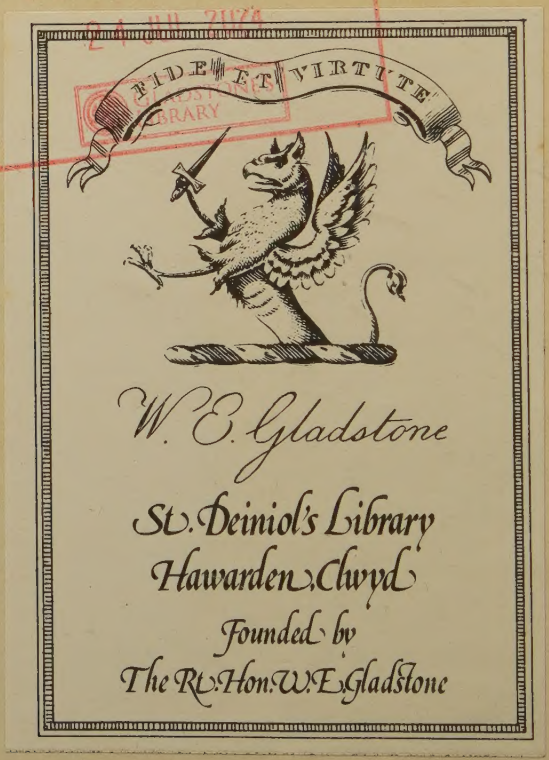
B 25-1/5

Cancelled from
Gladstone's Library



The Old Testament Wisdom Books and Their Teaching

ST. DEINIOLS
HAWARDEN
LIBRARY

THE OLD TESTAMENT WISDOM BOOKS AND THEIR TEACHING

By
HARRY RANSTON, M.A., Litt.D.
Professor of Old Testament Interpretation in Trinity Methodist College, Auckland, New Zealand

Author of
Ecclesiastes and Early Greek Wisdom Literature

Cancelled from
Gladstone's Library
24 JUL 2024
GLADSTONE'S LIBRARY

LONDON
THE EPWORTH PRESS
J. ALFRED SHARP

First Edition, 1930

Cancelled from
Gladstone's Library
24 JUL 2024
GLADSTONE'S LIBRARY

Made and Printed in Great Britain by
The Camelot Press Limited,
London and Southampton

TO TWO NEW ZEALAND
METHODIST MINISTERS
GEORGE BOND
AND
CHARLES HENRY LAWS

PREFACE

THE writer has often felt the need of a book on the Old Testament Wisdom Literature which should take account of recent scholarship in this important field and be suitable as a basis for college lectures or private study. Such a handbook is here attempted.

My great indebtedness to earlier workers on this fascinating subject is gratefully acknowledged. The references given are confined mainly to authorities accessible to English readers. To Mr. G. R. Bowden and Mr. D. O. Williams I owe a debt for valued assistance with the proofs.

H. RANSTON.

TRINITY COLLEGE, AUCKLAND, N.Z.,
May 1930.

CONTENTS

CHAP.		PAGE
I.	THE WISDOM LITERATURE IN GENERAL	11
II.	THE BOOK OF PROVERBS : A—INTRODUCTION	31
III.	THE BOOK OF PROVERBS : B—THE TEACHING	61
IV.	THE BOOK OF JOB : A—INTRODUCTION	102
V.	THE BOOK OF JOB : B—THE TEACHING	133
	PROBLEM OF SUFFERING IN THE OLD TESTAMENT	188
VI.	THE SONG OF SONGS : A—INTRODUCTION	190
VII.	THE SONG OF SONGS : B—THE TEACHING	228
VIII.	THE BOOK OF ECCLESIASTES : A—INTRODUCTION	232
IX.	THE BOOK OF ECCLESIASTES : B—THE TEACHING	279
	INDEX	305

Chapter I

THE WISDOM LITERATURE IN GENERAL

(1) The Name.—The Wisdom Literature is so called from the fact that therein the Wise Men of Israel (חֲכָמִים) expound the nature and applications of their practical wisdom, their considered findings on questions of moral and religious philosophy. In our Canonical Scriptures the Wisdom Books are Proverbs, Job, the Song of Solomon, and Ecclesiastes. Some or all of the following Psalms have been included : i., viii., xix., xxix., xxxvii., xlix., l., lxxiii., xc., xcii., ciii., civ., cvii., cxii., cxix., cxxxix., cxlviii. Certain scholars (Toy, W. T. Davison, Siegfried) would exclude the Song, but others (Zöckler, J. M. P. Smith, W. R. Harper, H. E. Ryle) disagree. Rightly it is argued that, whichever interpretation is adopted, the fundamental teaching of the Song—the beauty and nobility of genuine love—is completely consonant with the ideas and spirit of the Sages, and a striking illustration of their broad human sympathies. In the Extra-Canonical Writings the Wisdom Books are : Ecclesiasticus (=Ben Sira), the Wisdom of Solomon, Baruch (cf. iii. 9 ff.), 4 Maccabees. Wisdom elements are also found in the Pirke Aboth (Sayings of the Jewish Fathers), the writings of Philo of Alexandria, and in the recently discovered Odes of Solomon.

(2) Two Classes.—This literature may be divided into two distinct classes. The first group of books deals with matters of practical philosophy and morals. They expound the popular wisdom of experience, and consist mainly of maxims relating to conduct.

Proverbs, Ecclesiasticus, parts of Ecclesiastes, and some Psalms belong to this class. The other group is what is sometimes termed 'speculative' philosophy, only it would be a mistake to think of it as speculative in the same sense as the Greek schools. These books are concerned with problems of the moral and religious life, with difficulties arising from reason and the experiences of life with respect, for example, to the divine control of the world. They are, in the main, continuous treatises. Thus: Job, parts of Ecclesiastes, the Wisdom of Solomon, certain Psalms, &c. The Song seems more akin to the first group than the second, though not without affinities to both. But both classes are vitally related, for those who analyse and expound conduct and its happy or unhappy issue are sooner or later led to discuss the difficulties which rise as to Providence. Besides, as Edersheim remarks,[1] 'the two are only the different aspects, or the different kinds, of the great problem, which Wisdom (in God) sets before us in His manifestations, and which Wisdom (in man) has to solve by faith and obedience.'

(3) A Recognized Place in Revelation.—In the Old Testament there are three main channels of divine revelation—the priests, the prophets, and the Wise Men. Jer. xviii. 18 is instructive: 'For the law shall not perish from the priest, nor counsel from the wise, nor the word from the prophet' (cf. viii. 8; Ezek. vii. 26). It is clear that the Sages held a place in the community as recognized as that of prophet or priest, and represented a certain definite attitude of the Hebrew mind. For centuries they lived and worked side by side, though prophecy had declined before the Wisdom thought had reached its highest development.

Even in pre-Exilic times the Wise Men seem to have formed a special class, or even school, which is certainly the case at a later period, when we have indications of professional study and the instruction of

[1] *Introduction to Ecclesiasticus*, p. 10.

pupils (Isa. iii. 3, xxix. 14 ; Jer. ix. 12, 23, xviii. 18 ; Exek. vii. 26 ; Prov. i. 6, 8, ii. 1, iii. 1, iv. 1, 10, v. 13, xiii. 14, xxii. 17 ff., xxiv. 23 ; Job xv. 18 ; Eccles. ix. 17, xii. 11, &c). Though teachers rather than preachers, it can be inferred from Prov. i. 20–1, viii. 2 ff. (cf. Job xxix. 7) that, when occasion demanded, they took their stand in the crowded streets and market-places and there proclaimed their message of wisdom. It might be argued from 2 Sam. xiv. 1 f., xx. 16, 22, that women were included. But these instances are early, and probably they were ' wise ' in the sense of possessing unusual shrewdness rather than in the technical sense of being members of a guild.

(4) Relation to the Scribes.—The Wise Men have sometimes been identified with the early Scribes. It is indeed the case that by the time of Ben Sira (= Ecclesiasticus, *c.* 180–175 B.C.) they were not distinguishable (xxxviii. 24, xxxix. 11). It is probable that the Wise Men were, as a rule, Scribes, and the functions must often have coincided (cf. Jer. viii. 8). But the Scribe was not of necessity a Sage, and in earlier times the two classes were separated, though not without influence upon each other. Gressmann and Oesterley think that, though Scribes, the early Sages were rather ministers and officers of State than mere writers and copyists. In reality they represent somewhat different attitudes towards religion. The Scribes conceived their function to be that of studying and expounding the Law and the Scriptures, and, by special attention to the technical and ceremonial elements, they laid the foundations of Rabbinism. The Wise Men, on the other hand, were first concerned with the exposition of the practical wisdom of daily life and conduct, and then, under the quickening spirit of contact with the thought of other peoples as well as their own experiences of the workings of Providence, they set themselves to the discussion of the deeper problems of life, death, suffering innocence, and prosperous wickedness.

(5) Early Wisdom.—The simpler forms of Wisdom-reflection among the Jews are seen in such riddles as those of Samson (Judges xiv. 12 f.), fables like those of Jotham (Judges ix. 8–15) and Jehoash (2 Kings xiv. 9 ff.), the parables of Nathan (2 Sam. xii. 1–6), the woman of Tekoa (2 Sam. xiv. 4–9), and the prophet (1 Kings xx. 39 f.). Even less developed are the pithy, proverbial generalizations arising from ordinary experience and the observation of human life and nature recorded in Gen. x. 9 ; 1 Sam. x. 12 ; 2 Sam. v. 8, xx. 18 ; Jer. xxxi. 29 ; Ezek. xvi. 44, xviii. 2.

In the Old Testament, 'wisdom' (חָכְמָה) is primarily the skill of the soldier (Isa. x. 13), the technical worker (Exod. xxviii. 3, xxxv. 25 ; 1 Kings vii. 14 ; Isa. xl. 20), the magician (Exod. vii. 11), the man in charge of affairs of administration (Gen. xli. 33, 39 ; Deut. i. 13, xvi. 19, xxxiv. 9). It is the faculty of cleverness, shrewdness, prudence, acute observation in the ordinary events of life, the result being embodied in some terse, striking, and not seldom witty saying. The word became specially used of ethical and moral principles, that higher and finer prudence in the religious affairs of the man striving to harmonize his life with the law of God (Deut. iv. 6 ; Isa. xi. 2, xxxiii. 6 ; Prov., Job, &c.). 'Wisdom' was a more or less technical study from the days of Solomon (1 Kings iv. 30–4, x. 1 f.).

(6) Wisdom Literature Mainly Post-Exilic.—Wisdom *Literature*, as such, arose when the need was felt for some permanent record of the utterances of the Sages. At first these would be preserved in the memory, and so passed on from teacher to disciple. Later it would be expedient to commit them to writing, and often in modified and more perfect forms. Collections would be made, and these became the bases of some of the larger works we possess (e.g. Proverbs).

The Golden Age of this literature may be set at about

the fourth century B.C. ; at any rate it was in the post-Exilic period that it reached its highest point of development. There were reasons for this. (*a*) In the first place, the religious reconstruction carried out by Ezra (*c.* 444 or 397 B.C.) had produced the legalistic spirit. An orthodoxy arose in which the intellectual life became more or less imprisoned within the limits of the ancient traditional law and blinded to the realities of the present. It was natural that corrective and protestant influences should grow up in the minds of thoughtful people, and find literary expression. (*b*) Further, Israel had come into serious contact with Greek culture and civilization. This could not but stimulate the reflective powers, and prove a great attraction to many minds. It could no more be ignored by the Jews than by other peoples. There was serious danger that the native ethics and religion might be destroyed by a laxer system of living. The cultivation of the Hebrew reflective Wisdom-thinking was seen to be a means of holding on to the more intelligent minds. Moreover, (*c*) prophecy had declined. It was no longer a living and original force. Apparently its direct and immediate inspiration was a thing of the past. But God had not failed His covenant-people. The great prophets had indeed fulfilled their vocations, but He had another channel of revelation open. When Israel was no longer an independent nation, with the free political action so essential to the proper functioning of the prophet, then the Sages came into their own. Behind them lay the teachings of the prophets and the work of the priests, and the time was fully ripe for the practical application of the essential truths of the one and the correction of the one-sidedness of the other. Again, (*d*) all the sufferings of the Exile had been theirs. The cruel yoke of the oppressor had galled both body and soul, and begotten moral perplexities. Questions could not but arise as to the adequacy of accepted doctrines of Providence. Problems of life, death, and the undeserved suffering of the pious were thrown into

the centre of discussion. The righteousness and goodness of God had to be vindicated in the face of facts which seemed to lead to doubt and despair.

It is outside the scope of this volume to deal with the later developments of the Wisdom thought. Besides the Extra-Canonical Books mentioned in section (1), it is enough to notice the influence upon Rabbinic ideas and Kabbalistic mysticism, and, above all, that in many ways (e.g. its universalistic spirit) it played an extremely important part in paving the way for the Christian religion. Not only in the writings of SS. Paul and James, but even in the words of our Lord Himself, there are evident indications of indebtedness.

(7) Wisdom Reflection International.—'Wisdom' was not peculiar to Israel. Rather it was international, and so regarded from the earliest days. Even Solomon's gift was of the same character as that of other nations, though of a higher quality. 'And Solomon's wisdom excelled the wisdom of all the children of the East, and all the wisdom of Egypt,' &c. (1 Kings iv. 30 f.). The ancients awarded fame for sagacity to Edom[1] (Jer. xlix. 7; Obad. viii.; Job ii. 11). Ezekiel mentions the wisdom of Tyre (xxviii. 2 ff.). That of Egypt is spoken of several times (Gen. xli. 8; Exod. vii. 11; 1 Kings iv. 30; Isa. xix. 11), as also that of Babylon (Isa. xliv. 25; Jer. l. 35; li. 57) and Persia (Esther i. 13, vi. 13). On the other hand, in the Book of Baruch (first century A.D.—about 70) a later opinion is stressed that the wisdom of these other peoples is of a very different nature from that of the Jews: 'None of these have known the way of wisdom, or remembered her paths' (iii. 23).

Gressmann thinks of an international school on

[1] R. H. Pfeiffer suggests that Edomitic influence is seen in the agnostic or pessimistic attitude to life found in some parts of the Old Testament, it being thought that in Edom pessimism was the natural outcome of a depressing environment. (See *Expository Times*, October 1926, p. 28.)

which the early Sages were dependent. Sellin[1] has argued that Solomon brought the first teacher from Egypt, where proverbial wisdom had been flourishing from the second millennium B.C. The evidence leads one strongly to suspect the influence of it in Proverbs. Evident traces of Greek sources can be found in Ecclesiastes, and perhaps in Proverbs. Possibly Arabian, Babylonian, and Persian thought was not without consequence. The Hebrews could not be other than taught by contact with their neighbours. They were not isolated from cosmopolitan streams of thought, though in the processes of assimilation they proved their marvellous genius for higher spiritual reinterpretation. Hebrew Wisdom is incomparably higher than that of others. At the same time the student must beware of regarding every likeness as a proof of dependence. Parallel though independent courses of literary evolution are not unknown. Some of the aphorisms (e.g. in Proverbs) are the commonplaces of experience everywhere. Similar types of mind in similar circumstances may quite independently produce similar expressions.

(8) Wisdom Ideas in Other Biblical Books.—Wisdom elements can be found in books other than our special literature. William Rainey Harper[2] has an extremely suggestive section, in which he points out: (*a*) That 'Wisdom' deals with such laws of life and conduct with respect to God and one's fellow men as are already set forth in the Decalogue, the regulations in Exod. xxi.–xxiii., in Deuteronomy and Leviticus. (*b*) That our literature treats of cosmogony (Prov. viii.; cf. Job xxvi. 12 f., xl.–xli.), the laws and principles with which the universe came into being.

[1] *Introduction to the Old Testament*, p. 207, English trans.

[2] *The Work of the Old Testament Sages*, p. 47. This cheap little book (50 cents), published by the University of Chicago for the American Institute of Sacred Literature, is a good guide to the study of the biblical material. Kent and Burrows is excellent, but more expensive—*Proverbs and Didactic Poems*.

Thus it is brought into close relationship with Gen. i. 1–ii. 4 (cf. Ps. lxxiv. 12–17, lxxxix. 7 ff., civ., &c.) Further, (*c*) since 'Wisdom,' in the sense of the skill of the artisan, was closely associated with the Tabernacle (Exod. xxxi. 1–11) and with the complete Levitical service, even ritual is to be connected with the Wisdom element.

(9) Relation to the Prophets.—Possibly the suggestions in the last paragraph may seem fanciful to some; but there is no doubt as to the attitude of the prophets, who not seldom discoursed upon the principles of Wisdom, and even used the thought-forms of the Sages. For example, note the proverbial method of expression in Isaiah (i. 3, ii. 22, iii. 10, 11, x. 15, xiv. 4, xxxii. 6*a*, &c.), Jeremiah (xiii. 23, xxiii. 28*b*, xxxi. 29), Ezekiel (xii. 22, xvi. 44*b*, xviii. 2), Hosea (viii. 7, x. 1, 12–13), Amos (iii. 1–8, v. 3, 19, vi. 12, &c.), Micah (ii. 4), and Habakkuk (ii. 8 f.). Some of these may be fragments of ancient gnomic sayings otherwise lost to us. Parables are not uncommon (Isa. v. 1–6; Ezek. xvii. 2 ff., 22–4, xxiv. 3–5). Mark also in Wisdom Literature fashion how God's laws in the workings of nature are used to illustrate lessons in higher spheres (Isa. xxviii. 23–9, lxi. 11, lxv. 8 ff.; Jer. xvii. 3–11).

Moreover, the essential principles of the Wisdom spirit can be found in germ, and sometimes even in more or less developed forms. W. R. Harper[1] has well said that in Amos the sage element is strongly seen in the recognition of divine law in nature and universal history, in the spirit of observation and philosophical inquiry, and in the indifference to any special and unconditioned claims of Israel to the regard of Jehovah, who has a very real relationship to other people. Again, in our literature (see p. 87) great emphasis is laid upon knowledge; in fact, virtue and knowledge

[1] *International Critical Commentary*—Amos and Hosea, pp. cix., cxxx., cxxxvii.

seem to be identified,[1] or, at the very least, knowledge is reckoned the essence of virtue. Compare here the similar stress laid upon knowledge in Hosea (ii. 20, iv. 1, 6, v. 4, vi. 3, vii. 11, &c.), Isaiah (i. 3, vi. 9, xi. 2, xxix. 24, &c.), and Jeremiah (iv. 22, v. 4, viii. 8, ix. 12, &c.). In Hosea all hopes of right conduct depend upon the knowledge of God, which to the prophet just meant religion. In Amos (iv. 13, v. 8 f., ix. 6), Jeremiah (x. 12 f., xxxi. 35), and in 2 Isaiah (e.g. xl. 26, xlii. 5, xlv. 7, 12, 18, liv. 16, &c.) is the same sense of a world-law lying behind all creation so beautifully expressed in Prov. viii. And the great discussions in Job and Ecclesiastes on the problems of divine providence and innocent suffering have their roots in the perplexities of Habakkuk (i.–ii.), the pained expostulations of Jeremiah (xii. 1–6, xx. 14–18, &c.), and in the one-sided emphasis by Ezekiel (xviii.) on individual responsibility, with its hard and fast proportion of reward or retribution in this world exactly accordant with moral deserts.

The Wise Men, as a class, were so far from being unfriendly to the prophets that they supplemented their work, and especially that of the greater seers. The prophets were not a very conciliatory race. Human nature being such as it is, the peremptory and uncompromising fashion in which they delivered their messages would often tend to antagonize rather than attract. The Sages took over these messages, individualized them, and expressed their essential truths in a happier and less irritating fashion. It is customary, and with justification, to regard the prophets as the most illustrious exponents of the Hebrew religious spirit. But it may be doubted if the influence of these spiritual experts would have been so permanent and far-reaching, apart from the work of the Wise Men in popularizing their ideals and creating amongst the ordinary people a spirit sympathetic with them.

[1] Toy in *International Critical Commentary*—Proverbs, p. xvi., and in *Enc. Biblica*, pp. 3912, 5328.

For they built upon the prophetical foundations. The battle for ethical monotheism had been won. No longer, thanks to their predecessors, was there need to combat idolatry, which is ignored, or to contend for individual responsibility to God. Taught by them, they insist that sacrifice is less pleasing to God than love, trustful obedience, and goodness of character. Both use the same motive for righteous conduct and the avoidance of the opposite—the sureness of reward or punishment (Proverbs iii. 16, xi. 4, 21, 31, xiii. 21, xx. 7; the three friends and Elihu in Job, &c.; and *passim* in the prophets). Thus the desire for personal well-being is appealed to, just as, in the prophets, national prosperity is urged as the certain outcome of righteous living. Then, too, if the text of Prov. xxix. 18 is correct (cf. Toy, in loc.), the highest estimation of prophecy is expressed: 'Where there is no vision, the people cast off restraint.'

On the other hand, the earlier prophets were somewhat impatient with the Sages of their own day (Isa. v. 21, xxix. 14; Jer. viii. 8, ix. 12, 23, &c.). It has been thought that the particular individuals to whom they were antagonistic were charlatans, or of the class of false prophets, or worldly wise politicians to whom shrewd measures of expediency seemed vastly more important than strict adherence to religious principles. Some of those condemned may have been such; but there are good reasons for supposing that the early prophets were suspicious of the contemporary Sages. Sellin,[1] who thinks the Wisdom-reflection came to Israel from Egypt, suggests that its foreign origin led to its depreciation. Another point to be noted is that it was somewhat rationalistic in spirit, and so to the intensely mystical prophet it might appear to savour of conceit, and be subversive of true religion. The difference in temper and outlook between the two classes is also important. The prophets were idealists, mystics, visionaries. Divine truth very often came to them

[1] *Introduction to the Old Testament*, p. 207.

intuitively, and then they saw the inner meaning of things like a flash. Passionate and enthusiastic fervour is a dominant characteristic. They were men who lived lives of conflict, in which they ever summoned the people to immediate battle for God. The Wise Men were realists, thinkers who looked at life from the practical point of view. They often remained neutral in the struggle between prophets and people. In temperament they were quieter, less fervent. The truths they taught came to them through patient observation of human nature and shrewd reflection upon human experience in the light of the fundamental principles of revealed religion. Great emphasis was laid upon the workings in human life of general moral and spiritual laws.[1]

It is not surprising that then, as many a time in the days since, the man whose religious experience was at white heat should be impatient with the colder man who kept out of the strife. In addition, to the idealist the man of practical wisdom ever seems to be a long distance behind the line. Such men appear too conservative and compromising—irritating brakes to the swift progress so ardently desired. Again, the prophets were interpreters of the events of national and international history. Their writings are full of references to such, and, unless the reader has some knowledge of current affairs, they are largely closed books. The Sages (see next section) were indifferent to national themes ; there are few or no references to historic events. They did not interfere in policies. There is not a line on such essential prophetic conceptions as the Messiah, Covenant-People, Kingdom of God, &c. Such an attitude could only have been

[1] While these inferences have been drawn mainly from the later literature, we have little reason for supposing that the early Sages were of an essentially different spirit from those of a subsequent generation. Compare, however, *Proverbs and Didactic Poems*, p. 8, by Kent and Burrows, who argue that the early Sages confined their attention to questions of State and the guidance of rulers, and rejected the teaching of the prophets.

regarded with disfavour. Only after the great prophets had finished their work did the Wise Men come into their kingdom and receive their due appreciation.

(10) Characteristics of Wisdom Thought.—Some of the more characteristic features of this literature must now be mentioned. (*a*) It is human and universal in its outlook rather than national and particularistic. Rightly the Sages have been named the 'Humanists of Israel.' There are no references to events of Jewish history. This is probably so even in the case of Ecclesiastes. National prejudices are wanting. They think in terms of humanity in the widest sense. The common individual, however humble, is their interest. Apart from the title, there is no reference to Israel in Proverbs, none at all in Job, and but one each in Ecclesiastes and the Song. Judah is mentioned but once, and that in the heading of a section in Proverbs (xxv. 1). Jerusalem is never named except a few times in Ecclesiastes and Canticles. Jewish phraseology and characteristics are notably absent. References to the *specifically* Mosaic law and cultus, to the Sinai Covenant, &c., can rarely be found. In the Canonical Books there is nothing of the Messianic hope so prominent in prophecy, although it may be found in the Extra-Canonical work of Ben Sira (e.g. xliv. 21, xlvii. 22, xlviii. 10, &c.). The idea of a future Golden Age made little or no appeal. The thought of the Sages overleaps national boundaries. It is cosmopolitan, universal. The Wise Man was not seldom a traveller (cf. Ecclus. xxxix. 4). He was concerned with man as man rather than with him as a member of a covenant-race. We are not to suppose, however, that he was altogether without patriotic feeling, for it would hardly be possible for a Jew to divest himself of this completely ; but it was submerged under the tide of wider sympathies.

The case is somewhat different in the Wisdom Books without the Canon. Ben Sira assumes that only Jews possess Wisdom, which is incorporated in the Mosaic

Law (xxiv. 7–12, 44–50). In Baruch (iii., 9–iv. 4), Wisdom is also identified with the Law, and it is denied that the Wisdom of Israel is akin to that of other peoples ; and the latter part of the Book of Wisdom (x.–xix.) betrays a strong particularistic prejudice. But there is no trace of this in the biblical books. Probably, as Toy suggests,[1] the fact that (leaving out Ecclesiastes, which is mainly Greek) more prominence is given to national topics as the literature advances is explained by the increasing persecution, which tended to bring out the more distinct expression of national feeling.

(*b*) It is primarily practical rather than abstract and speculative. Its sphere is mainly that of conduct ; it deals with practical ethics. The offering of moral advice and the education of the young constitute the chief aim. The precepts (e.g. in Proverbs) are for all classes and conditions of folk—husband, wife, king, judge, workman, trader, farmer, host, guest, &c.—in their everyday business and relationships. Human life in all its ranges is brought under consideration, and the laws are stated which govern its happy issue or the reverse. Prominence is given to the observation and psychological analysis of character. Theistic principles of morality are formulated into brief, pithy rules suitable for common practice.

(*c*) Emphasis is laid upon the working out in human nature of fixed spiritual law. Gregg[2] has put the matter so : The Sages 'were the first among the Israelites to begin to allow for the action of general laws. They were so occupied with the contemplation of nature and man, that they assigned increasing importance to laws of action and reaction which worked themselves out automatically, without calling for direct intervention on the part of God.' While this is so, it must not be thought that God was left out of the reckoning. No Jew did that. These laws at work in human life were of the divine will. The Sages were deeply religious, but they saw God's hand in the

[1] *Enc. Biblica*, p. 5327. [2] *The Wisdom of Solomon*, p. xxix.

ordinary operations of general law rather than in the special exercise of miraculous power. They were in harmony with much of the modern religious spirit.

(*d*) The Canonical Literature (apart from Job) on the whole lacks form. There is little or no systematic and sustained development of the thought. Isolated aphorisms abound, and there are many meditations showing no signs of coherent and systematic arrangement. Rarely are the arguments developed, and then not very far. Subjects change with startling rapidity, and sometimes the opinions expressed are inconsistent.

(*e*) Together with man, a main subject of study is nature. It is said in 1 Kings iv. 33 that Solomon gave much attention to natural history, and every one of these books illustrates the same sympathetic interest in animate and inanimate creation (cf. Job xxxviii. ff. ; Prov. xxx. 24 ff. ; Eccles. i. 5 ff. ; xi. 3 ; Canticles ii. 11 ff. ; Ben Sira xlii. 15–xliii. 32, &c.). The writers saw all around them the proofs of the divine operation. But this was not peculiar to our books.

(*f*) Like the prophets, the Sages were not partial to, if indeed not absolutely indifferent to, ritualistic observances. Salvation by such means was altogether alien from their spirit. They insisted upon the practical side of religion rather than the ceremonial. Divorced from right conduct in detail the exercises of worship were repugnant. Allusions to the sacrificial cultus and the Mosaic Law are rare, and then only incidental as existing institutions. Vows (Eccles. v. 4) and tithes (Prov. iii. 9) are to be paid. Probably[1] these men took part with their fellows in such observances without clearly spoken protest. But they assuredly regarded salvation as connected with the grace of God, and obedience to Him, rather than with ceremonial practices. 'To do justice and judgement is more acceptable to the Lord than sacrifice' (Prov. xxi. 3 ; cf. xv. 8, xvi. 6, xxi. 27 ; Wisd. xi. 23).

[1] Cf. *Enc. Biblica*, pp. 5326 f. Yet read A. Bertholet : *History of Hebrew Civilization*, p. 380, on the competitive struggle between Sage and priest.

On the contrary, the Extra-Canonical Ben Sira heartily welcomed the sacrificial system. Yet he does not fail to insist upon the necessity of the right spirit in the offerer. Further, side by side with sacrifice as an atonement for sin he puts benevolence, forgiveness, fasting, death, forsaking of sin, mediatorial suffering. To him, keeping the law and taking heed to the commandments are just as effective. And it is noteworthy that nowhere does he *expressly* say that sacrifices have atoning power (cf. v. 5, vii. 8, 9, 31 ; xxxiv. 18–26, xxxv. 1–7, xxxviii. 11, xlv. 16, l. 1–24).[1]

(*g*) In certain of these books, of which Job is the outstanding example, attention is given to the problems raised as to divine providence. Men who gave themselves to the contemplation and analysis of human character, and to the discussion and exposition of the laws of happy and successful living, were sure to be led to reflect upon the perplexities so constantly presented by the sorrows of the righteous and the prosperity of the wicked. Hence human suffering, and specially innocent pain, with its tendency to destroy faith in the man not prepared to wear blinkers, comes into the forefront of discussion ; and attempts are made, on the basis of fixed religious principles, to reconcile it with the righteousness of God. So far from being obscurantist traditionalists, such Sages as the writers of the Books of Job and Ecclesiastes were not afraid to set aside conventional opinions and inherited ideas when these conflicted with the facts of carefully analysed experience. They saw no sin in frankly discussing objections to faith. Doubt to them was not 'devil-born.' To many to-day they make a real appeal ; for they bravely faced the facts as they saw them.

(11) The Jew and the Greek.—Comparison with the classical, and especially the Greek, philosophies is of extreme interest. While the contents of some of the

[1] Cf. Oesterley's *Ecclesiasticus*, pp. lxv. ff., lxxi. ff., 222.

Jewish books are often characterized as 'speculative,' and the Sages called 'philosophers,' there was no philosophy of the academic and abstract type with which the name of the Greeks is usually associated. In that sense there is no philosophy in the Bible. Greek philosophy belongs to a later stage of intellectual culture. Not Plato and his fellows, with their elaborately constructed systems, but rather the earlier gnomic writers, such as Theognis, Solon, and Hesiod, are the Hellenic brethren of our Wise Men. Wisdom thought is not so much philosophy as the beginnings of it on its practical side.

The Hebrew language itself was unsuitable for the exposition of really speculative thinking. Abstract terms were few. Many of the ideas such as philosophy needs to work with—duty, conscience, purpose, consciousness, &c.—could not be set forth with the strict exactitude which scientific definition demands. Only in later times did logic and metaphysics receive attention. It was contact with the Greeks, and afterwards with the Arabs, which stimulated the later Jews to true philosophic reasoning, and this finds in Philo of Alexandria (20 B.C.—A.D. 50) its first outstanding writer.

Thus, while Greek philosophic thought is genuinely speculative and abstract, the Jewish Wisdom-reflection eschews dialectic and metaphysical inquiries.[1] It is concrete, and practical in its aim of teaching how to direct one's life aright. Not even in Job, which is the most orderly of our writings, is there anything even approaching the nature of a carefully articulated system. Unlike the Greeks, the Hebrews showed no desire to inquire into first principles or the final causes of things, or to propose to themselves abstract problems. They felt no attraction in the thought of winning an ordered and consistent view of the universe, and were indifferent to the spirit of disinterested inquiry which sought for knowledge for its own sake. Their interest

[1] Cf. A. Bertholet: *History of Hebrew Civilization*, pp. 304 f.

was in conduct and its issues, and not in the scientific analysis of thought.

The Hellenic thinker sought, by the exercise of reason in the investigation of the universe, to reach its inner meaning. It was his mind which discovered to him what was good and true. As for deity, God was far from being everything to him. If he did reach an idea of God, it was because he had thought Him out, the resultant of a process of reasoning. Thus his deity was a construction of his mind, the *end* of a process of discovery, and, indeed, often an unethical principle of unity rather than the personal God of a genuine ethical monotheism. To the Jew it was otherwise. Revelation furnished the key to the riddle of the universe. He started his thinking with certain definite theological presuppositions. He *began* his inquiries with the God revealed to him in the records of his people as omnipotent, creator, sustainer, ruler, righteous, holy, &c. Certain basic demands and conceptions of religion were accepted as axiomatic. The universe was interpreted in terms of a God who had sent forth commands and given His laws. His ideas were fundamentally ethical and religious. From the thought of God as basis he worked at the laws and problems of life. His aim was to bring all conduct into harmony with the divine will, to explicate and apply that will, and to verify and vindicate the truths already revealed in view of the perplexities arising from the experiences of life and the workings of the mind.

(12) The Sages Criticized.—This literature has often been criticized from the religious standpoint. It is said to be too secular, that the precepts are often nothing more than counsels of prudence. There is some justification for this ; and it is certainly true that there is an entire absence of the glowing religious enthusiasm, the delightful fervour and abandon towards God, which is so striking a feature of the Hebrew prophet and psalmist. Nevertheless, an

opinion such as that of Fairweather,[1] except with respect to Ecclesiastes, can hardly be accepted without protest : ' These books are not to any great extent the expression of a living experience of religious truth.' Remember, as already noticed, that the practical ethics were securely grounded on strong religious presuppositions. Religion was never left out of sight. God was not forgotten ; He was the Power behind all. The moral code of Wisdom laid down as the guide and controller of life was identified with the divine law. The fear of the Lord was the beginning of wisdom. His will was the final rule of righteousness. To embody that will into terms suitable for everyday life and conduct, and to lead their pupils and readers to obey it in detail, was the great aim of the Wise Men, and its extreme importance should be adequately recognized. A deeply religious spirit impregnates their utterances. They performed a very great function for God, and did it remarkably well. The whole range of life as well as the whole man—body, soul, mind—was claimed for Jehovah. It was sought to apply the prophetic ideals to ordinary conduct in order to conserve their value even for the truly pious man.

(13) The Inspiration of the Sages.—With regard to inspiration and revelation, the Sages shared with the prophets the honour of being the chief media of revelation. They also ' spake from God, being moved by the Holy Spirit.' They fulfilled a very real function in the revelation and exposition of the divine will. Sometimes there appears an unwillingness to give adequate acknowledgement to this. Their inspiration is regarded as ' secondary.' They were not, it is said, ' seers coming forth from God's immediate presence, with authority to publish new truths in His name.' Now it is true that they do not come forward with a ' Thus saith the Lord.' Oracular revelations disappear. There are no predictions of future happenings in the

[1] *The Background of the Gospels*, p. 84.

prophetic style. Yet, while they never seem to have *explicitly* claimed, as did the prophets, divine inspiration,[1] they did receive their own distinctive revelations of the truth of God. As already remarked, the foundation of their teachings was the recorded revelation, with human experience illuminating it and being in turn illuminated by it. They were convinced that they taught God's word, and were sent forth by authority (cf. Prov. ix. 3 ; Eccles. xii. 11), and sure that as long as the world remained their work would endure (Ecclus. xxxix. 9). Keep in mind also that they flourished at the very period when their methods and teachings were necessary to bring the ideals of the prophets to a fuller fruitage. God was behind the whole revelationary development, and the Sages had a very important and essential place in it. Revelation is not confined to one particular medium (cf. Heb. i. 1). God used as channels men very differently endowed in heart, mind, and experience. Even in the gloomy Koheleth (=Ecclesiastes) is a real unveiling of the significance of God for men. More truly can this be said of Job and the chapters in Proverbs in which the divine Wisdom is expounded. Surely the mark of God is on these as well as on the revelation of the divine origin of human love in the Song, and on the almost-Christian character of some of the aphorisms in Proverbs. Professor J. M. P. Smith[2] thus sums up : 'Upon the whole, the "Wisdom" element must be considered the noblest expression of the Hebrew spirit. . . . It demonstrated irrefutably the vitality of the Hebrew religion. When the forms and institutions in which Hebrew idealism had clothed itself were shattered beyond restoration, "Wisdom" furnished new channels for the expression of the ideal, and kept the passion for righteousness and truth burning. . . . Nationalistic, particularistic, transitory elements were discarded, and emphasis was laid upon the great

[1] Yet note Elihu's claims in Job xxxii. 8 and perhaps xxxiii. 4.

[2] Hastings' *One Volume Dictionary of the Bible*, p. 976.

fundamental concepts of religion adapted to the needs of all men everywhere.' As these studies hope to show, each writing had the truth of God to declare to its own age, and pointed forward to the need of the fuller revelation in His Son, and has its own special message for to-day.

Chapter II

THE BOOK OF PROVERBS

A.—INTRODUCTION

I. Contents

The book is divided into several distinct sections, more or less dissimilar in character and with special headings: A, chapters i.–ix.; B, x.–xxii. 16; C, xxii. 17–xxiv. 22; D, xxiv. 23–34; E, xxv–xxix.; F, xxx.–xxxi.

A. Chapters i.–ix.

The superscription, 'The Proverbs of Solomon the Son of David, King of Israel,' was probably intended as the title, not of A only, but of the subsequent sections.

Title and purpose of not only this section, but also introduction to the later chapters (i. 1–6), with its motto or fundamental principle (i. 7).

Warnings against organized pursuit of profit by crimes of violence (i. 8–19). Wisdom's denunciation of those who refuse to listen to her appeal (i. 20–33). The diligent pursuit of Wisdom praised (ii.). The blessings which are conferred by the fear of God and following after Wisdom (iii. 1–26). Kindliness and integrity enjoined (iii. 27–35). Exhortation to obey the Wise Men, avoid wickedness, and pursue Wisdom (iv.). Warnings against unchastity (v.). Condemnation of suretyship, slothfulness, slander, and adultery (vi.). Further advice against unchaste women (vii.). Wisdom is personified; she calls attention to her high nature and honourable function and the blessings she is willing to give to men (viii.). Wisdom and Folly, both

personified, as hosts, and their invitations set one against the other (ix.).

The Sage addresses his pupil as 'my son,' and the discourse is hortatory. The style is poetical, or, at any rate, rhetorical prose. Unlike other sections, with their more or less isolated aphorisms, here the discussions are flowing and continuous. The same subject is often regarded from varying standpoints. There is a unity in the language and the sequence of thought which suggest a single writer, though Oesterley disagrees (*Westminster Com.*, p. xiii.). It was written as an introduction to at least B, and possibly even the other sections. Its purpose, according to Cheyne,[1] was to counteract the rather commonplace morality of the earlier proverbs by recommending a purer and more inspiring ideal.

Certain doubtful or misplaced verses excepted, the poetic parallelism is regularly carried out, and is that termed synonymous, i.e., the original thought is repeated or echoed in the second line :

> Honour the Lord with thy substance,
> And with the firstfruits of all thine increase (iii. 9).
> My son, despise not the chastening of the Lord,
> Neither be weary of His reproof (iii. 11).

In contrast with the other sections save F, there are no repetitions within chapters i.–ix. Many scholars are reminded of Deuteronomy by the hortatory tone of these chapters (cf. Deut. vi. 4–9, viii. 5, xi. 18–21 with Proverbs i. 8, iii. 3, iii. 12, iv. 1, 10, vi. 20, vii. 3).[2] Chapters ii. 5–8, iii. 27–35, ix. 7–12 seem to be later insertions.

B. Chapters x. 1–xxii. 16.

These have the title : 'The Proverbs of Solomon.' No principle of classification or arrangement can be

[1] *Job and Solomon*, p. 156.

[2] Driver's *Introduction to the Literature of the Old Testament*, p. 396–7.

discerned, though occasionally there are groups of aphorisms or suggestions of connexion by catchwords or initial letters. The proverbs are isolated couplets, and number 375. The expression is very pithy, there being rarely more than seven or eight words in a verse. In chapters x.–xv. the parallelism is mainly antithetic —that is, the thought of the first line is illustrated in the second line by contrast with its opposite :

> A wise son makes a glad father,
> But a foolish son is a grief to his mother (x. 1).
>
> A slack hand makes poor,
> A diligent hand makes rich (x. 4).

In xvi. 1–xxii. 16 the distichs are usually synonymous or synthetic. In synthetic parallelism, the thought of the first line is completed or supplemented in the second line by the addition of a reason, purpose, consequence, comparison, &c.

> Answer not a fool according to his folly,
> Lest thou also be like unto him (xxvi. 4).
>
> It is better to dwell in a desert land
> Than with a contentious and fretful woman (xxi. 19).

Within B itself are over a score of repeated couplets or lines. The following have been noted[1] : x. 1, xv. 20 ; x. 2, xi. 4 ; xi. 15, xvii. 18, xx. 16 ; xiii. 14, xiv. 27 ; xiv. 12, xvi. 25 ; xiv. 20, xix. 4 ; xvi. 2, xxi. 2 ; xix. 5, xix. 9 ; xx. 10, xx. 23 ; xxi. 9, xxi. 19 ; x. 6, x. 11 ; x. 8, x. 10 ; x. 15, xviii. 11 ; x. 27, xix. 23 ; xi. 13, xx. 19 ; xi. 14, xv. 22 ; xi. 21, xvi. 5 ; xii. 14, xiii. 2 ; xiv. 31, xvii. 5 ; xv. 33, xviii. 12 ; xvi. 18, xviii. 12 ; xix. 12, xx. 2. Between B and C are the following proverbs identical or very similar : xi. 14, xxiv. 6 ; xiii. 9, xxiv. 20 ; xx. 18, xxiv. 6 ; xxii. 14, xxiii. 27. Between B and D : xx. 22, xxiv. 29 ; and between B and E : x. 13, xxvi. 3 ; xii. 11, xxviii. 19 ; xv. 18, xxix. 22 ; xvi. 12, xxv. 5 ; xvii. 3, xxvii. 21 ; xviii. 8,

[1] Cf. Cheyne, op. cit., p. 133 ; Toy's *Commentary*, p. viii.

xxvi. 22 ; xix. 1, xxviii. 6 ; xix. 13, xxvii, 15 ; xix. 24, xxvi. 15 ; xx. 16, xxvii. 13 ; xxi. 9, xxv. 24 ; xxii. 2, xxix. 13 ; xxii. 3, xxvii. 12 ; xxii. 13, xxvi. 13.

The repetitions within B of the same proverb, or part of it, point to this section as a compilation of previously existing matter, collections of various dates instead of the product of one individual.[1] The modified forms in which some were repeated strongly suggest a previous history. A further conclusion has been drawn, from the recurrences between the various sections, that the authors of B, C, D, and E did not know the compilations of one another.

On the whole, the aphorisms of B are more secular in tone than definitely religious, and yet there are some exceedingly noble religious sayings. It has been noted that the name of God is found more often here than elsewhere in the book, being mentioned some fifty-five times. A happy and cheerful spirit generally prevails.

C. Chapters xxii. 17–xxiv. 22

This part is headed : 'The Words of the Wise.' Chapter xxii. 17–21 is the compiler's introduction. The use of 'my son' (xxiii. 15, xxiv. 13, &c.) and the hortatory style remind one of A. On the other hand, it is unlike it in being a collection of aphorisms on different subjects rather than in the main a discourse on one subject. In contrast with B, it not only adopts the style of a father addressing his son, but is more descriptive, consecutive, and argumentative. Some subjects are developed at length (e.g. xxiii. 22–5, 29–35). The short pointed couplet is found only six times. The usual form is the tetrastich. There is one proverb of three lines, others extending over five, six, seven, and even eight lines. Except xxiv. 16, the parallelism is synonymous. The thought is mostly practical and secular, though the name of God is used about five times, and the religious tone of some of the sayings is excellent.

[1] See, however, Oesterley, pp. xvii. f.

Within C there are several repetitions : xxii. 23, xxiii. 11 ; xxii. 28, xxiii. 10 ; xxiii. 3, xxiii. 6 ; xxiii. 17, xxiv. 1 ; xxiii. 18, xxiv. 18. See last section for proverbs occurring in both B and C. Ludwig Keimer (*American Journal of Semitic Languages*, October 1926) finds in C three collections : xxii. 17–xxiii. 11 ; xxiii. 12–18 ; xxiii. 19–xxiv. 22. It is in this section that close verbal parallels can be found to the Egyptian 'Teaching of Amen-em-ope.'

D. Chapter xxiv. 23–34

The heading is: 'These also are [sayings] of the Wise.' These verses, similar in contents to C, were evidently added as an appendix to it by its compiler or the editor of the whole book. The aphorisms fall into one each of five, two, three, four, and eleven lines (xxiv. 30–4). The last is a parable on sloth drawn from experience. The parallelism is mainly synthetic or synonymous. There is one case each of repetition between D and A (vi. 10 f., xxiv. 33–4), D and B (xx. 22, xxiv. 29), and D and E (xxiv. 23, xxviii. 21).

E. Chapters xxv.–xxix.

The title is : 'These also are Proverbs of Solomon which the men of Hezekiah, King of Judah, copied out.' Probably two collections are here united : xxv. 2–xxvii. 22 and xxviii.–xxix., connected by a separate discourse, xxvii. 23–7. The first has affinities with C, and chapters xxviii. f. with B. As to the form, Toy's[1] examination shows that in chapters xxv.–xxvii., with the exception of four or five cases of antithetics, we have comparisons and single sentences, while in chapters xxviii.–xxix. there are thirty-three antithetic distichs and twenty-two comparisons and single sentences. Couplets are thus not so common as in B, and there are aphorisms of three, four, five, and even a poem of ten lines. Thus, especially in the first two chapters, comparisons (twice only in B : x. 26, xi. 22)

[1] Toy's *Commentary*, p. x.

prevail. Sometimes the comparison is left to the intelligence of the reader to infer :

> Charcoal for embers, and wood for fire,
> And a quarrelsome man to make strife hot (xxvi. 21).

At other times it is explicitly brought out :

> Like a bird that wanders from her nest
> Is a man who wanders from his home (xxvii. 8).

The proverbs in E (137 in all) are popular sayings, free from abstruseness, expressed pointedly and with fine imagery. They are connected sometimes by catchwords, at others by similarity of theme. While there are, especially in chapters xxviii. f., many likenesses to B, they originated in a different state of society, e.g. the monarch is not represented as so worthy of admiration.[1]

Very many of the maxims are prudential directions for the guidance of life. Religious proverbs are almost entirely absent (xxix. 13, 18, 25). There are only seven references to God, of which five are in the last two chapters. Within E, the only repetitions are xxvi. 12, xxix. 20 ; xxviii. 12, xxix. 2 ; xxviii. 12, xxviii. 28. There is but one case between E and D (xxiv. 23 and xxviii. 21) ; those between E and B have already been given.

F. Chapters xxx.–xxxi.

A collection containing three appendices : xxx., xxxi. 1–9, xxxi. 10–31. Within this section there are no repetitions. The parallelism, apart from a few verses, is synonymous. The three sections are different in spirit from the other collections. They were probably appended by the latest editor after all the rest had been compiled.

1. Chapter xxx. The superscription is : ' The words

[1] Driver, op. cit., p. 401.

of Agur the son of Jakeh ; the oracle. The man saith unto Ithiel, unto Ithiel and Ucal.' The title is doubtful. Chapter xxx. 1–14 in the LXX version follows xxiv. 22, and verse 1 reads : ' Reverence my words, son, and receive them and repent. These things says the man to those who trust in God, and I cease.' The Vulgate has : ' The words of the assembler, the son of the Vomiter (of instruction). The vision which the man spake with whom God is, and who, since God remains with him, is strengthened.' The word ' Agur ' has been taken as ' collector ' or ' hireling ' ; ' Jakeh ' as ' obedient,' ' pious '; the word rendered ' oracle ' as a place-name ' Massa ' (cf. Gen. xxv. 14). Probably verse 1 should read : ' The words of Agur, the son of Jakeh of Massa. I have wearied myself, O God, I have wearied myself, O God, and am consumed ' (cf. R.V. margin). Nothing is known of Agur ; he was possibly a foreigner. The subjects are : The writer's inability to reach the knowledge of God (1–4) ; the sureness of His revelation (5–6) ; prayer for moderate circumstances, neither riches nor poverty (7–9) ; warning against slander of servants (10) ; aphorisms condemning or approving certain things, mostly arranged in fours (11–31 ; cf. vi. 16–19) ; condemnation of pride and anger (32–33).

Opinions differ as to whether the words of Agur extend to verse 4, or 9, or 10, or the whole chapter. It is doubtful whether verses 5 ff. are the answer of an editor to the preceding words of Agur, or the latter's own reply to his previous quotation of a sceptical opinion.

God is mentioned four times in verses 2–9.

2. Chapter xxxi. 1–9. The heading should be : ' The words of Lemuel, King of Massa, which,' &c. Nothing is known of Lemuel, whose name is often taken as = ' consecrated to God.' There are a few uncommon words. The king is warned against wine

and women (2–7), and urged to befriend the needy and to judge justly (8–9).

3. Chapter xxxi. 10–31. A description of the ideal housewife. There is no heading. The poem, which is in a very different style from the other sections of Proverbs, is in the form of an acrostic dealing with one subject only, each verse commencing with a letter of the Hebrew alphabet. As in 2, there is no mention of God.

II. The Proverb

The title of our book in the Massoretic text is : 'The Proverbs of Solomon, son of David, King of Israel.' The LXX has : 'The Proverbs (παροιμίαι) of Solomon, son of David, who reigned in Israel' (so A). The Latin Vulgate follows the Hebrew in the title, but in the superscription has : 'The Book of Proverbs, which they call in Hebrew Misle.' In later times the name used was simply 'Proverbs.' Other names given were : 'The Wise Book' (Dionysius of Alexandria), 'The Instructive Wisdom' (Gregory of Nazianzum). In conjunction with Ecclesiasticus and the Wisdom of Solomon it was called by the Greek Fathers : 'All-Virtuous Wisdom' (ἡ πανάρετος σοφία). It was cited in both the Talmud and early Christian circles under the name of Solomon. Melito of Sardis has : 'The Proverbs of Solomon, which is also Wisdom.' Another old Jewish name seems to have been, 'The Book of Wisdom.' Some of these, however, may have been not so much titles as descriptions of the contents.[1]

The word translated 'proverb' is *māshāl* (מָשָׁל). Its original sense seems to have been likeness, resemblance, identity. Thus it is used to express a similarity, a comparison ; it 'denotes properly a representation, i.e. a statement not relating solely to a single fact, but standing for, or representing, other similar facts' (Driver). It is closely allied to the מְלִיצָה (a dark,

[1] *Enc. Biblica*, p. 3907.

involved saying), and the חִידָה (a knotty, intricate saying, such as a riddle). All three words are used in i. 6 ; 'To understand a מָשָׁל and a מְלִיצָה the words of the wise and their חִידוֹת.'

The word *māshāl* seems to have covered the wide range of Hebrew poetry. It is used of[1] :

1. A short, pointed saying, characterizing an event, or a generalization from experience. For example, 1 Sam. x. 12, 'Is Saul also among the prophets?' ; 'The fathers have eaten sour grapes, and the children's teeth are set on edge' (Ezek. xviii. 2 ; cf. Gen. x. 9 ; 1 Sam. xxiv. 14 ; Ezek. xii. 22 f., &c.). 2. That against which a saying is directed, a byword : 'I will even give them up to be . . . a reproach and a *māshāl*, a taunt and a curse' (Jer. xxiv. 9 ; cf. Deut. xxviii. 37 ; 1 Kings ix. 7). 3. A figurative prophetic message, often conveying a taunt or a satire (Isa. xiv. 4 ; Hab. ii. 6 ; Mic. ii. 4 ; Num. xxiii. 7, 18, xxiv. 3, 15, 20, 21, 23). 4. A parable, inasmuch as it is often an expanded proverb (Ezek. xvii. 2, xxi. 5, xxiv. 3). 5. Longer poems, such as the historical ode in Num. xxi. 27–30, and the didactic discourses in Ps. xlix. 4 and lxxviii. 2. 6. Sententious maxims of moral wisdom (Job xiii. 12, xxvii. 1, xxix. 1 ; Eccles. xii. 9). It is to 5 and 6 that our book belongs.

The terse *māshāls* of 1 are spontaneous *utterances* rather than literary expressions, anonymous sayings called forth by circumstances and experiences which had made a striking impression on the popular mind and imagination. The aphorisms of our book are *literary*. The Sages would use the simpler utterances as the foundations of their work, but their maxims are artistically constructed, and show the marks of careful polish and literary finish. It is clear that a prolonged period of reflection lies behind them.

Some proverbs evidently began as riddles (2 Chron. ix. 1). At first, xxii. 1 would run something like this :

[1] Brown, Driver, and Briggs, *Lexicon*, p. 605 ; *Enc. Biblica*, p. 3905.

'What is of more value than gold?' The answer would be: 'A good name'; xx. 17 would be: 'What seems at first sweet and then like a mouthful of gravel?' to which the answer is: 'Stolen food.'[1] It may be that xxx. 15 ff. are arithmetical riddles: 'What four things never say: Enough?' Bertholet thinks xxx. 4 a poetical riddle. A fable may be the basis of the section on the ant (vi. 6–11). Of course, the proverbial style does not excite the emotions as does noble verse. With all its richness of imagery, it lacks the grand passion of great poetry. This is partly due to the *māshāl* being usually such a condensed expression, as well as to the fact that many of them are so crowded together that the ordinary reader passes from one to the next without spending the time necessary to perceive their real beauty.

III. Foreign Influence on the Book

Read again section 7 in Chapter I. D. S. Margoliouth believes that chapters xxx. and xxxi. are indebted to a south Arabian source. Gunkel thinks it possible that Babylonian influence may be traced in Proverbs. Jeremias[2] finds similarities to descriptions in the story of Ishtar in ii. 16–19, v. 3–5, vii. 27; as well as likenesses to the Babylonian underworld in ix. 18 and xxi. 6. Among the Elephantine papyri discovered in 1906–8 were fragments of the story of the Wise Ahikar, translations of which are available for the English reader in Cowley's *Jewish Documents of the Time of Ezra*, and Charles's *Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha of the Old Testament*. In Col. vi. 81 f. we read: 'Withhold not thy son from the rod, if thou canst not keep [him from wickedness]. If I smite thee, my son, thou wilt not die, and if I leave [thee] to thine own heart [thou wilt not live].' With this compare Prov. xxiii. 13 f.:

[1] Cheyne, op. cit., p. 127; *Enc. Religion and Ethics*, vol. x., p. 413.

[2] *The Old Testament in the Light of the Ancient East*, English trans., pp. 263 f. Also cf. Barton's *Archaeology and the Bible*, pp. 467 ff., and Oesterley, pp. xxxvii. ff.

'Withhold not correction from the child; if thou beat him with the rod, he will not die. Thou shalt beat him with the rod, and shalt deliver his soul from Sheol.' Other, though less striking parallels, can be found. The Aramaic papyrus-text was evidently written about 420–400 B.C., but the book itself is earlier —about 550–500 B.C. Cowley, D. C. Simpson, among others—though Rendel Harris disagrees—regard it as originally composed in the Babylonian language, and pagan in character. As to the relationship to Proverbs, opinions differ. Cowley decides against direct borrowing on either side; both are part of the common stock of popular wisdom abundant in the East. Somewhat against this is the similarity of language. Many scholars think that the Hebrew writer is the debtor, just as he was to Amen-em-ope the Egyptian. On the other hand, see Oesterley, p. 204.

Much more can be said for the influence of Egypt. Outside our book, many consider that the story of Joseph and Potiphar's wife has affinities with 'The Tale of the Two Brothers.' It is suggested by Breasted that Ps. civ. is indebted in both thought and sequence to Ikhnaton's hymn in praise of Aton. As for aphoristic literature, this had flourished in Egypt even so far back as the third millennium B.C.; for Ke'gemni and Ptah-hotep belong to the sixth dynasty, if not earlier. There is reason to expect to find traces of Egyptian[1] proverbial thought in the literature of the people so near a neighbour as Israel, and one indeed which—or part of it—actually sojourned in the southern land.

Similarities of thought and expression can be found with little difficulty.[2] Worthy of attention are these from the confessions in chapter cxxv. of the Book of the Dead and elsewhere[3]: 'I have not defrauded

[1] A. Bertholet, in *History of Hebrew Civilization*, p. 94, quotes proverbial forms of expression in the Tell Amarna letters, suggesting that they are Palestinian imitations of Egyptian usages.

[2] Cf. *Expository Times*, vol. xxiv., p. 474, and Oesterley, p. xxxvii.

[3] *E. R. E.*, vol. iii., p. 828, vol. v., p. 478; Sugden, *Israel's Debt to Egypt*, pp. 170 ff., and Barton, ibid., pp. 469 ff.

the oppressed of his property' (cf. xxii. 16); 'I have not traduced the slave to his master' (cf. xxx. 10). In this literature there is the condemnation of false weights and balances, as in xi. 1, xvi. 11, xx. 10, 23; pride, as in xvi. 18 f., xxix. 23; respect of persons, as in xxiv. 23; depreciation of others, as in xi. 12, xiv. 21; strife with a neighbour, as in xxv. 8. Compare also 'I have not been a gossip' with xvi. 28, xi. 13; the praise of those who were 'closed of mouth concerning what their eyes saw,' and the blame of those who repeat that which any man, be he prince or peasant, saith 'in opening the heart' with xii. 3 and xvi. 28; 'I have not been hot in reply' with xv. 1; 'I have not made myself deaf to words of right and truth' with x. 17 and xv. 32; 'I have not been hasty' with xiv. 29 and xxix. 20; 'I have not multiplied my speech overmuch' with x. 19 and xvii. 27. Also cf. Amenhemet, 'In the day of adversity a man hath no adherents,' with xix. 7; and Ani, 'A man falleth in ruin because of his tongue,' with xiii. 3 and xviii. 7. Others could be gathered.

Such parallels, however, as we saw in Chapter I. (7) must not be taken as proofs of certain dependence. The making of proverbs is universal. Similar types of mind in the same stage of development may produce similar ideas, and even expression, quite independently. Further, both may have sometimes utilized common material, as Oesterley argues.

The case, however, is very different with respect to the relationship to the 'Admonitions of Amen-em-ope.' Here there can be no doubt as to the indebtedness. The main facts are these[1]: In 1923, Dr. Wallis Budge published a hieroglyphic text acquired by the British Museum in 1888. It was found in a hollow

[1] Excellent accounts in English are by M. H. Dunsmore and H. J. Cadbury in the American *Journal of Religion*, May 1925 and January 1929; Ludwig Keimer in *The American Journal of Semitic Languages and Literature*, October 1926; Barton, op. cit., pp. 558 ff.; Oesterley, *The Wisdom of Egypt and the Old Testament* and *Old Testament Essays*, pp. 156 ff.; and *Journal of Egyptian Archaeology*, vol. xii., pp. 191 ff.

Osiris-figure, and came from Akhmim. At the time Dr. Budge noted a couple of parallels with Proverbs, but it was Professor Adolf Erman, the eminent Egyptologist of the University of Berlin, who in 1924 called attention to its importance for biblical interpretation. Further light has been thrown on the matter since, especially by the investigations of Hugo Gressmann, Grimme, Sellin, Lange, D. C. Simpson, and Oesterley.

Amen-em-ope lived at Panopolis, was an Egyptian Government official of the highest rank, being what might be called ' Secretary of Agriculture ' for Egypt. For the guidance of his youngest son, a priest of Min, he composed in thirty chapters, as the fruit of rich experience, a book of religious and moral instructions which prove to be of a very high order, and, indeed, unique in ancient pre-Christian literature, with the exception of the Old Testament.[1] The work was so highly valued that it was used as a school manual for officials. The date is variously given from 1500 to 700 B.C.

This writing stands in very close relationship with Section C (chapters xxii. 17–xxiv. 22) of the Book of Proverbs, a collection in several respects unlike the previous chapters. To Section C, especially down to xxiii. 11, the aphorisms of Amen-em-ope show resemblances in both thought and phraseology so striking that it is impossible to regard them as only accidental. The authorities agree that the Hebrew book is in some way based on the Egyptian.

Points of contact can be found with most of the verses down to xxiii. 11, and with others as well. In fact, some of the language of the Egyptian text can be used to correct errors in the Hebrew text. The following are good examples :

Proverbs :	*Amen-em-ope :*
Rob not the poor because he is poor, and oppress not the lowly in the gate (xxii. 22).	Keep thyself from robbing a poor man and being tyrannical to a weak one.

[1] So Oesterley, who also believes that Amen-em-ope was influenced by the Old Testament spirit and teachings due to the Hebrew prophetic movement.

Proverbs :

Make no friendship with a man that is given to anger ; and with a wrathful man thou shalt not go (xxii. 24).

Remove not the ancient landmarks which thy fathers have set (xxii. 28).

Remove not the landmark of the widows [so Toy], and enter not into the fields of the fatherless (xxiii. 10).

Seest thou a man skilful in his business ? He shall stand before kings (xxii. 29).

Eat thou not the bread of the evil-eyed, neither desire thou his dainties. . . . The morsel which thou hast eaten shalt thou vomit up and lose thy flattering words [or ' lovely things '] (xxiii. 6, 8).

Weary not thyself to be rich . . . for [riches] certainly make themselves wings, even as an eagle that flieth towards heaven (xxiii. 4, 5).

Note also the LXX, xxiv. 22b :

Let no falsehood from the tongue be spoken to the king ; let no falsehood go out from the tongue.

Amen-em-ope :

Associate thyself not with the violent, and do not hold conversation with him.

Remove not the landmark upon the boundaries of the fields.

Be not greedy for an ell of ground, and do not violate the boundary of a widow.

A scribe who is skilled in his office will find himself worthy to be a courtier.

Be not greedy for the possessions of the mean man and be not hungry for his bread. . . . If thou fillest thy mouth with too much food, thou vomitest it up again, and so thou art without thy good things.

Give not heed to riches. Weary not thyself in searching after a surplus. . . . [Riches] have taken to themselves wings like geese, and they have flown away to the heavens.

Enter not into a quarrel in the presence of a prince, and do not falsify thy speech.

These examples are sufficient to prove the dependence of our book upon that of Amen-em-ope. Apart from the resemblances to C, Erman and Gressmann cite fifteen (thirteen from B, two from E) other cases where they suspect connexion. Oesterley and Barton add others. But the parallels in xxii. 17–xxiii. 11

are not merely occasional, but in a series fairly consecutive. The two sections, moreover, commence in like fashion :

Incline thine ears and hear the words of the wise, and apply thy heart to my knowledge. For it is pleasant if thou keep them in thy breast, if they are established together upon thy lips [or 'like a peg upon thy lips'] (xxii. 17).	Incline thine ear and hear my words, and apply thy heart thereto to understand them. It is well if thou set them in thy heart. . . . Let them rest in thy breast, that they may be a key (?) in thy heart . . . then will the peg be upon the tongue.

Some difficult passages in the Hebrew text are illuminated. An example is xxii. 20 : 'Have I not written unto thee excellent things in counsel and knowledge ?' The word translated 'excellent things' has always been a puzzle to commentators. The written text is שלשום (=formerly, three days ago), but the *Qere*, or text to be read, is שלשים (=captains, and then taken as a metaphor for 'excellent sayings,' such being regarded as leading ideas, a usage without real parallel). The LXX and Vulgate versions, &c., give 'thrice,' 'triply.' Now the word for 'thirty' is שלשים, but the older interpreters did not adopt this, because it did not seem to give a satisfactory meaning to the verse. But note Amen-em-ope : 'See for thyself these thirty chapters ; rejoice in them and teach them.' It becomes sure that 'thirty' is the right word ; and the case is strengthened by the fact that in xxii. 17–xxiv. 22 we have exactly thirty independent proverbs. A further point of interest is that the aim of the thirty chapters of the Egyptian sage is 'in order to be able to make answer to him who speaks to you, in order to furnish a report to him who sends one forth' ; while that in xxii. 20*b* is given as : 'That thou mayest make answer truthfully to those who send thee forth.'

But in handling his Egyptian material the editor of C proves himself not so much a translator as a reviser

with the true Jewish spirit. He was not a mere copyist, but one with the gift of the nobler Hebrew minds for the adaptation and transmutation of foreign material to higher spiritual uses. In using the admonitions of Amen-em-ope he eliminates all polytheistic and other elements inconsistent with the religion of Yahweh. References to Egyptian deities are deleted. He passes by the allusions to the alien cultus and eschatology. Significant additions are also made : ' That thy trust may be in Yahweh ' (xxii. 19) is striking ; xxii. 23 is another : ' For Yahweh will plead their cause and despoil of life those that despoil them ' (i.e. the poor) ; and xxiii. 11 : ' For their redeemer is strong ; he shall plead their cause against these.' See xxii. 18, xxii. 22, xxiii. 10, and parallels just quoted. All is brought into the sphere of Yahweh.

How Israel came into possession of the ' Admonitions ' can only be conjectured. It has been suggested that an Egyptian Jew living in the Persian period translated it into Hebrew or Aramaic for the benefit of his fellows, and that part of this translation was embodied in the collection within the biblical book designated C.

Oesterley at first thought that both the compiler of C (xxii. 17–xxiv. 22) and Amen-em-ope were indebted, not one to the other, but to an older, now lost Hebrew collection ; also that some other parallels may be due to both utilizing common floating material so abundant in the East. In his article in *Old Testament Essays* (pp. 156 ff.) he gives Prov. xvi. 11 as witnessing to Egyptian influence on Israel, but xx. 9, on the other hand, as the source of the saying in Amen-em-ope. But in his commentary he admits the direct dependence of C upon Amen-em-ope.

On Greek influence see p. 80.

IV. Vocabulary[1]

Though, on the whole, the vocabulary does not differ

[1] Lists in Driver, op. cit., pp. 403 f. Cf. *Speaker's Commentary*, p. 517.

essentially from that of other books of the Old Testament, yet certain features are noticeable. A number of words or phrases are used which are never, or rarely, found elsewhere. Most of those belong to x. 1–xxii. 16. For example : ' Fountain of life,' ' destruction,' ' hand to hand, ' crookedness,' ' to show the teeth ' (=to snarl), ' steersmanship ' (=direction, guidance), ' backbiter.' Others are characteristic : ' correction,' ' folly,' ' fool,' ' scorner,' ' the simple,' ' the void of understanding,' ' efficient wisdom,' ' my son,' &c. Since our book is aphoristic, or semi-philosophic, some peculiar features characteristic of such are to be expected. There are a few traces of post-Exilic and Aramaic expressions.[1] Arabic, Persian, and Greek (a Graecism may be in vii. 16) words are absent.

V. The Authors

The titles cannot be accepted as authoritative. They simply represent traditional opinion. Some scholars, however, attach more importance to that of E : ' These also are Proverbs of Solomon which the men of Hezekiah, King of Judah, copied out ' (xxv. 1). We have evidently to do with several separate collections, with differences in tone, style, phraseology, as well as repetitions of couplets or parts of them, which point to different authors or compilers. Not only so, but there are evidences of collections within collections ; for example, we have repetitions, and variant expressions of the same thought within (e.g. B, C, E), which, though some of them may be due to later redactions (so Sellin), nevertheless can hardly have originated with the same writer. The differences between chapters xxv.–xxvii. and xxviii.–xxix. also seem to indicate different compilers.

Note that the name of Solomon is not mentioned in the headings of C, D, and F. These are definitely given to other writers. With respect to the other

[1] *Enc. Biblica*, p. 3917.

sections, the most that can be said is that they preserve a good deal of matter which is earlier than the dates of compilation, and some of which may go back to the Solomonic era or Court, and even to the King himself. It is probable that Solomon's outstanding reputation as a Sage (cf. 1 Kings iv. 29–34) led to his name being attached to aphoristic collections, just as that of Moses to those of Law. But much of the contents does not fit the Solomon of history. The standpoint is not that of a monarch, but a subject (xvi. 10–15, xix. 12, xx. 8, 26, 28, xxi. 1). Think of his polygamy, and the exaltation of monogamy (xii. 4, xviii. 22, xix. 13 f., xxi. 19, xxii. 14). Compare his depreciation of wealth with his great riches (xi. 28, xv. 16). Could an idolater (1 Kings xi. 4 ff.) have taught the pure, unquestioning monotheism assumed everywhere in the book?

VI. Chronological Arrangement

It is universally agreed that B (x. 1–xxii. 16) and E (xxv.–xxix.) are the oldest parts of our book, inasmuch as the *māshāl* is there found regularly in its simplest and least developed forms. But it is not easy to decide which collection was made first. Many think E is earlier. It is argued that since the parallelism, especially of xxv.–xxvii., is not so regular in form, and the proverbs are more forcible and epigrammatic and less religious than those of B, they are consequently more primitive. The aphorisms of B are regarded as more highly finished, and hence as belonging to a later stage of literary development, though it is freely admitted that some individual proverbs may be older.

Others, however, put x. 1–xxii. 16 first. Here is the simple couplet, while in E couplets are not so common, and there are aphorisms of four, five, and even ten lines. These last point to a later stage of development. It is also thought that, since in E a less prosperous and settled state of society is reflected, and the king is regarded as unrighteous, these are further indications of a later time. The evidence has been differently

interpreted. Both B and E contain early material. Probably B is the earlier collection, but in E (especially in xxv.–xxvii.) are individual proverbs of older date.

Then come C and D (xxii. 17–xxiv. 22, xxiv. 23–34). They are appendices to B, and proved to be more recent by several facts : the type of aphorism is more elaborate and developed, extending sometimes over several verses. Couplets and lines are repeated or remade, with those in B as models (e.g. xx. 18, xxiv. 6, xxii. 14, xxiii. 27). Further, the presentation of the thought points to a greater development of ethical reflection and systematic instruction. The ' my son ' form of address, the hortatory style, and the personification of Wisdom (xxiii. 26), favour a date nearer to A (i.–ix.) than B or E. C and D seem to belong to the same age, and perhaps the same compiler.

The next in order of time is A (i.–ix.). Instead of the more or less simple and pithy proverbs of B and E sections, there are highly rhetorical, flowing, and drawn-out periods, a much more elaborate literary construction. This argues for a more advanced stage of literary culture. The thought, too, is more systematically arranged and philosophically conceived, and demands a longer period of reflection. The pedagogic form also suggests a later date, when the Sages had become a powerful class and held their schools of instruction. A has notable affinities with Ecclesiasticus (*c.* 200–180 B.C.).

Last in chronological order is F (xxx.–xxxi.). Language, style, spirit, and contents all lead to this conclusion. (See p. 57.)

VII. Dates[1]

A number of scholars adhere to the pre-Exilic origin of most of Proverbs. Gressmann, Sellin, and Oesterley are the most prominent recent advocates ; the former

[1] Creelman's *Introduction to the Old Testament* contains excellent summaries of critical opinion up to 1917.

regarding only chapters i.–ix., xxxi. 10–31 as post-Exilic, the latter being in general agreement. Earlier critics, such as Davidson, Ewald, and Driver, date even i.–ix. in the time just before the Exile.

The reasons given are as follow :

(*a*) There are pre-Exilic references to the Sages as a leading and influential class (see Chapter I., Section 3) and oral proverbs were in current use before the Exile.

(*b*) The titles represent very early opinion, and should not be set aside except for strong reasons.

(*c*) The lack of references to the ritual law is more consistent with the earlier period than the later legalistic post-Exilic period.

(*d*) The problem of undeserved suffering has hardly risen in the book. Piety and prosperity, wickedness and suffering, are inseparably connected. Thus it belongs to a time of unquestioning orthodoxy, before the problem was raised in books like Job and certain of the Psalms.

(*e*) While it is true that, in the early period, the nation rather than the individual was emphasized, and in our book the whole spirit is individualistic, yet the Sages, being practical teachers, would be compelled to coin individualistic proverbs in giving expression to truth for everyday practice.

(*f*) The period reflected in the aphorisms (especially in B) is generally one of peaceful contentment and settled prosperity, and seems to indicate a time in the early days of the monarchy, before social evils had assumed grave proportions.

(*g*) In x. 1–xxii. 16 the monarchy is presented in a very attractive light, the king being spoken of in terms of admiration and respect. On the other hand, in xxv.–xxix. the king is regarded with little favour. But, while these differences indicate different times of origin for B and E, both sections evidently belong to dates before 586 B.C., when monarchy ceased.

(*h*) Written collections of proverbs already existed amongst neighbouring peoples, such as the Egyptians.

(*i*) In A (i.–ix.) some scholars find echoes of Deuteronomy vi. 4–9, xi. 18–21, which point to a time in the reign of Josiah not long before the Exile.

Critics like Sellin, who accept the pre-Exilic dating, are, however, prepared to allow the probability of later post-Exilic revisions and additions.

On the contrary, many students regard all the sections as post-Exilic, though they admit the presence of earlier material. The main reasons given are these :

(1) The aphorisms are not spontaneous *utterances* and popular *sayings*, but in their finished style and perfectly balanced thought bear the marks of conscious art and careful *literary* workmanship. In i.–ix. is highly rhetorical and flowing didactic poetry. These are proofs of a late date in that they demand a long period of literary polishing and ethical reflection. Such artistic perfection could only be reached after a long course of development. Everywhere are clear signs of the didactic methods of the later schools and professional Sages.

(2) A few post-Exilic and Aramaic expressions can be discovered.[1]

(3) The period of the prophets is over ; in fact, the Sages are building upon their foundations. The controversies, so prominent in earlier literature and even in Ezekiel, on behalf of the one God against polytheism are all past. Idolatry is ignored. A pure, unquestioned monotheism permeates the whole.

(4) Although in many respects the teaching in Proverbs is that of the prophets (e.g. the same estimate of pride, sacrifice, oppression, fear of the one God as basis of all worthy thinking and conduct), there is the notable difference that, whereas the prophet dealt with the nation and God's relationship to it, in the Sages religion is individualistic and universalistic.[2] In the

[1] Toy, *Commentary*, p. xxxi., and *Enc. Biblica*, p. 3917.
[2] Hastings' *D. B.*, vol. iv., p. 142.

former it is Israel against the world ; in the latter the division is between good and bad *men* as men.

Messianism is wanting. If the name Yahweh, God of Israel, were omitted, the contents would fit any people. The spirit is universalistic. All this is an index of a late period when the Jews were given to travel, wide reading, and reflection. The writers are humanists, keenly conscious of the importance of the universal and instructed human conscience. Whether or not, as many think, the change was due to the infusion of Greek culture, it points to a late date. Further, the argument above (*c*) that the absence of ceremonial law *must* point to an early date is sufficiently rebutted by the fact, witnessed to by some of the noblest and most spiritual Psalms, that the legalistic spirit was far from being the only one within the post-Exilic period.

(5) The conceptions of chapters i–ix. are unsuitable for any time other than after the Exile. Even Gressmann and Sellin realize this. Whether the idea of Wisdom here is, as some think, due to Hellenic influence or is allied to Rabbinical speculations, it implies a long history of discussion, and so a late origin.

(6) The use of the terms ' wise ' and ' wisdom ' in a technical sense to refer to a special class of outstanding and influential men well recognized and in authority as teachers with their pupils, also furnishes an argument for a late date. In pre-Exilic times (see Chapter I., Section 9) they had not been so universally respected, but rather held in disfavour by the prophets.[1]

(7) Toy[2] regards it as a post-Exilic mark that life as reflected in our book is mainly that of a city rather than that of the country. To this, however, it is sufficient to reply that even in pre-Exilic times the Sages would be more likely to gather in the cities.

(8) In the pre-Exilic period polygamy was legitimate

[1] Toy, *Commentary*, pp. xxii. f. [2] Ibid., pp. xxii. f.

(Deut. xxi. 15, Lev. xviii. 18); here monogamy is taken for granted. Further, while harlotry was not uncommon in the earlier period, it was often associated with the debased temple-prostitution. The harlotry prominently condemned in Proverbs is ordinary (not religious,[1] which ceased with idolatry at the Exile), and a more constant feature in the later monogamous community.

(9) Passages such as xxv. 3 f., xxviii. 2 f., 12, 15 ff., xxix. 2, are interpreted as referring to an oppressive government using some of the people as its agents.

(10) The term 'law' in pre-Exilic times refers to the instruction which is the command of Yahweh; here it refers to the later Legal Code, or to instruction, expecially that of the Wise Men (cf. iii. 1, xiii. 14, xxviii. 4–9, xxix. 18).

(11) Sheol in ix. 18 is the hell of the wicked; in the earlier literature it was the place of all departed spirits. Hence A is late. And if—which, however, is doubtful (see p. 90)—the higher belief in immortality can be found in some other passages, they originated at a very late period.

(12) The precepts indicate a higher stage of ethical reflection than those of Exilic and earlier times.[2]

(13) The references to the king may be held to indicate a date before the fall of the independent kingdom. But this is not necessarily so: for similar language can be found in Ecclesiasticus (180–175 B.C.; vii. 4–6, viii. 1–3, x. 1–5). The references are not specifically to Hebrew monarchs.[3] On the other hand, Toy's belief that the instructions of xxiii. 1 f. and xxv. 6 f. as to behaviour at the table of a king do not tally with the earlier period, but rather with the Grecian and

[1] *Enc. Biblica*, p. 1965. [2] Ibid., p. 3914.
[3] Gray, *Introduction to the Old Testament*, p. 146.

Maccabean times, when it was more common for the ordinary man to meet the monarch socially (cf. Josephus *Ant.* xii. 4, 3, 9), is somewhat countered by the fact that the first passage has points of contact with Amen-em-ope.

(14) Our book is very much akin to Ecclesiasticus. Toy[1] observes that both writers deal with the same class of society and social organization. Neither lays explicit claim to divine inspiration. Both recognize the Sages as a special class, Ben Sira giving a full description of their work and methods (xxxviii. 24–xxxix. 11). Therefore the dates cannot be very far apart.

Sellin, who still adheres to pre-Exilic time for chapters x.–xxix., endeavours to rebut some of these arguments.[2] He lays some stress upon the argument (*g*) above as to the existence of the Jewish monarchy being implied. He cannot find any references to the later Legal Code in xxviii. 4–9 and xxix. 18, as some think (10). The sense there is that of divine instruction, as in the time of Isaiah (viii. 16, 20, xxviii. 9–13, xxx. 9; Jer. viii. 8). Toy[3] agrees that in these two passages it is not the Jewish Legal Code that is in mind, but in the first passage it means the instruction of the Sages, and in the other, law or instruction in general. Oesterley thinks that xxviii. 4, 5, 9 and xxix. 18 are later insertions.

Sellin sees no signs that Prophecy and Law belong to a past age. The same demand for a pure morality was made in ancient Israel, in the Decalogue, and taken for granted in Amos and Hosea. Further, while polygamy (see 8) was legitimate in pre-Exilic times, the practice was different; and the very ancient Egyptian aphorisms refer to one wife in the same

[1] Cf. *Enc. Biblica*, p. 3916, and in his *Commentary*, pp. xviii., xxiii.

[2] *Introduction to the Old Testament*, pp. 208–11. So also Gore's *New Commentary*, pp. 377 f.

[3] *Enc. Biblica*, p. 3915; *Commentary*, p. 496.

manner as in our book. Neither does Sellin regard it as axiomatic that the aphorism is the last thing to find literary expression in a nation's life (see 1). The definite poetic form (of foreign origin) of the aphorism could have existed in early times. Moreover, he believes the culture of the Solomonic Court has been rated too low, as also the influence upon it of the thought of surrounding civilizations. Further, Gressmann argues, from the use of the book of the Egyptian Amen-em-ope as a source, that, since it implies the same thought of individual rewards and punishments in the present life as in Proverbs, it is not necessary to attribute this particular characteristic to the influence of the prophets, especially Jeremiah and Ezekiel, upon the Wise Men. Rather is it that the prophets started from it as an already existent Wisdom idea. Therefore scholars have erred in giving late dates.

Sellin, however, like others (e.g. Oesterley) who accept the pre-Exilic dating, is compelled to admit revisions and interpolations in the post-Exilic period. Older proverbs were remade, or others inserted more suitable to the age. These account for the unquestioned monotheism, the lack of polemic against idols, those implying monogamy, and those which betray prophetic influence and the reflective spirit. Others who date our collections, as such, in the post-Exilic period, think of a pre-Exilic groundwork or nucleus subsequently expanded into our present book. Still others who favour the later period allow that much early traditional matter has been incorporated in the book in a form remoulded to suit the age.

This last opinion is probably correct. As a literary movement, Wisdom reflection arose after the time of the great prophets, but a good deal of the material it worked up and re-shaped originated in earlier times. The real value of recent discussion has been, not that it has undermined the post-Exilic dating, but that it has shown the indisputable presence in our book of proverbial matter of a more ancient age.

It is, however, impossible to give more than approximate dates for the compilation of the various sections.

A. Chapters i.–ix. A late date is required by the developed literary structure, some words, the personification of divine Wisdom, the affinities with Ecclesiasticus, the conception of Sheol as hell, the speculative interest, Wisdom as a subject taught in schools by authoritative teachers, and the emphasis laid upon the sin of consorting with bad women (see VI., VII. 1, 2, 5, 8, 11). A considerable number of scholars believe that A, especially in chapter viii., shows the clear marks of Greek thought, and hence belongs to that period. Gressmann thinks of a time in the fifth century, Kautzsch and Sellin one in the fourth. The century later is more generally favoured (*c.* 300–250 B.C.). One or two scholars date later still. Oesterley thinks that elements of an earlier date were incorporated.

B and E. Chapters x. 1–xxii. 16, xxv.–xxix. It is to these sections mainly that the general arguments apply as to pre-Exilic or post-Exilic dating. For those who think the evidence points to the late period, the date most probable is one between 430 and 300 B.C. for B, and 400–300 B.C. for E. Remember, this refers to *compilation.* The use of early proverbs, and even existing collections of such, is readily acknowledged.

The pre-Exilic date often favoured for B is one during the early monarchy, during the reign of Jehoshaphat (876–851 B.C.) or in the early days of the eighth century. Sellin argues that the nucleus of B goes back to the Solomonic era—about 950 B.C. Gressmann and Oesterley think of about 750 B.C., and Kent of 621–600 B.C. With respect to E (xxv.–xxix.), value is placed upon the assertion in the heading of the part played by the men in the time of Hezekiah (720?–691? B.C.). Sellin believes that the kernel of E was due to the stimulus of the king. Gressmann and Oesterley agree and date about 750 B.C. But the heading itself is a

later opinion, and the chronicler knows nothing of Hezekiah as providing literary stimulus.

C and D. Chapters xxii. 17–*xxiv.* 22, *xxiv.* 23–34. Both from the same editor. Later than B (see VI.) ; possibly about 350–300 B.C., but probably nearer to A (300–250 B.C.), though, in spite of some likenesses, other features dissimilar prove a different compiler.

Sellin, who believes these sections pre-Exilic, thinks of the time of Jeremiah, and about then (reign of Josiah, 639–609 B.C.) is favoured by most who date early. It is in this collection that the ' Instructions of Amen-em-ope ' were drawn upon. Egyptologists, give his date variously from 1500 to 700 B.C. Therefore the date of C (or part of it) must be later. Gressmann and Keimer put it down at about 700 B.C.

F. Chapters xxx.–xxxi. Sellin finds himself unable to suggest any date for these chapters. Gressmann fixes 700 B.C. for chapter xxx., and perhaps xxxi. 1–9, while xxxi. 10 ff. is assigned to the fifth century. Most students regard the whole as post-Exilic. A date in the third or second century B.C. seems to be indicated by the questioning, sceptical spirit (so like Koheleth), the artificial numerical form (similar to late Rabbinism and the Pirke Aboth), and the idea of a definitely fixed written revelation of xxx. 5 ff., the Aramaic word in xxxi. 2 f., and the artificial acrostic poem of xxxi. 10–31.

It is not easy to determine the manner in which our book grew into its final form. It is clear that some of our present sections are themselves compilations. Among the many schemes suggested, the following—that of Toy[1]—appears as likely as any : Out of the small compilations x.–xv., xvi.–xxii. 16, xxv.–xxvii., xxviii.–xxix., the sections x. 1–xxii. 16, xxv.–xxix. were formed. Then came the formation of xxii. 17–xxiv. 22 and xxiv. 23–34, their combination, and the further

[1] *Enc. Biblica*, p. 3918 ; *Commentary*, p. xxx.

uniting of x.–xxix. into one book (some think that x.–xxiv. were first combined, and then xxv.–xxix. added). Next came i.–ix., written as an introduction to the others, and combined with them by the writer or an editor of the same period. Chapters xxx.–xxxi. were added later still. The whole process, which had been going on from the fourth century, was completed by the second century B.C.

VIII. Canonicity

Proverbs is one of the great poetical books of the third division of the Canon—the Hagiographa, or Writings. It would seem that at the Synod of Jamnia (*c.* A.D. 100), on account of certain contradictions and unseemly expressions, doubts[1] were expressed as to either the fitness of the book for inclusion within the Sacred Canon, or, what is more likely, whether it should be excluded from the liturgical reading in the synagogue. These objections were set aside, and never again raised. F. H. Woods[2] believes it was canonized before 180 B.C., and that parts (e.g. xxv.–xxix.) were recognized long before that.

IX. The Text

The Massoretic text has many minor errors, though the least of all in chapters i.–ix. Misplacements or editorial insertions have been discovered in ii. 5–8, iii. 27–35, iv. 18, vi. 1–19, ix. 7–12, &c. But editorial revisions in the interests of later religious conceptions, and for reverential reasons, are only rarely claimed by critics (iii. 5–10, vii. 18, xi. 7, xiv. 32, xxx. 31), who give a post-Exilic date. Since the contents were mainly ethical and not theological, later Jewish thinkers did not find changes so necessary, as in some other books, to harmonize with the conceptions of later times. Toy thinks that the many minor inaccuracies may be

[1] *Enc. Biblica*, p. 3907 ; Ryle's *Canon of the Old Testament*, pp. 194 f.

[2] *D. B.*, iii. 613.

partly due to scribal carelessness, or ignorance in dealing with a book whose text was not considered so sacred and fixed as that of the Law Books and the Prophetic Writings.

X. The Septuagint

The Greek Septuagint is the oldest and most important version, the translation of Proverbs having been made about 100 B.C. (Toy). It must be remembered that this text itself is often corrupt. There are considerable differences from our Hebrew text in the way of omissions, glosses, emendations, alternative renderings, and explanations. Additions are frequent, some of which may have had a Hebrew original, others only in Greek. The most important are those after iii. 16, iv. 27, vi. 8, and ix. 12. On the contrary, i. 16, xvi. 1, 3, xviii. 23, xx. 14–19, xxi. 5, &c., are omitted. The order of C, D, E, and F is different. Thus, xxx. 1–14 comes between xxiv. 22 and 23 ; xxx 15–xxxi. 9 between xxiv. 34 and xxv. 1 ; xxx. 10–31 after chapters xxv.–xxix. This is proof of the work of different editors. The evidence also suggests either, or probably both, of two conclusions[1] : Two different recensions of the Hebrew text in Palestine and Egypt, and the existence of much proverbial material from which that in our book was selected.

On the other versions the student must consult the standard commentaries.

XI. Use in the New Testament

Plumptre[2] has noted a number of passages in the New Testament in which Proverbs is either given or used : iii. 11–12 (Heb. xii. 5–6) ; iii. 34 (Jas. iv. 6) ; iv. 26 (Heb. xii. 13) ; xi. 31 (1 Pet. iv. 18) ; xiii. 7 (2 Cor. vi. 10) ; xxii. 8*a*, LXX (2 Cor. ix. 7) ; xxii. 8

[1] *Enc. Biblica*, p. 3908.

[2] *Speaker's Commentary*, pp. 525–7. Cf. also, for others, Elmslie's *Studies in Life from Jewish Proverbs*, pp. 210 ff.

(Gal. vi. 7) ; xxiv. 21 (1 Pet. ii. 17) ; xxv. 7 (Luke xiv. 10) ; xx. 21 (Rom. xii. 20) ; xxvi. 11 (2 Pet. ii. 22) ; xxvii. 1 (Jas. iv. 14–16) ; xxx. 4 (John iii. 13), &c. The version used was usually the Septuagint. Besides these, there are many other passages in which reminiscences of the language may be found. Some of the Beatitudes remind us of Proverbs. Worthy of mention above all is the way in which Jesus was identified with the personified Wisdom (cf. 1 Cor. i. 24, 30 ; Col. i. 15 ff. ; Matt. xi. 25 ff. ; Luke xi. 49) of chapter viii. Our Lord fulfilled not only the Law and the Prophets, but was the crown of Wisdom reflection as well.

Chapter III

THE BOOK OF PROVERBS

B.—THE TEACHING

(*a*) Ethical

(1) Although the various compilations collected in the Book of Proverbs belong to different ages and authors, and contain much material which very likely originated in the period before the Exile, for practical purposes it is best to treat the contents as a single whole. It is not easy to classify the miscellaneous aphorisms of the book, and the method here followed is to gather them together under various subject-headings. Very many branches of practical morality are taught, and not seldom an exceedingly noble standard is reached.

There are warnings against consorting with highway Robbers, ready to shed blood during their organized plundering. Robbery, far from being profitable, spells destruction to the robber (i. 10–19, iv. 14–17, vi. 17, x. 23, xxii. 22 f., xxiv. 15 f. ; cf. xxx. 9). From Amen-em-ope he gathers two sayings condemning Land Grabbing (xxii. 28, xxiii. 10) from the poor, the removal of their landmark, a sin, however, most strongly condemned elsewhere in the Old Testament (Deut. xix. 14 ; Isa. v. 8 ; Mic. ii. 2 ; Hos. v. 10 ; Job xxiv. 2).

(2) The Poor are not to be despised, contemptuously regarded, or oppressed, but treated with pity, kindness, and considerate dealing. Unkindness brings retribution ; for the needy are the special concern of God. Kindness is specially meritorious, and leads to His favour (xiv. 21, 31, xv. 25, xvii. 5, xviii. 23, xix. 17,

xxi. 13, xxii. 9, 16, 22–3, xxiv. 11, xxviii. 3, 27, xxix. 7, 14, xxx. 14, xxxi. 20). A form of robbery from the poor specially condemned is that of 'cornering' grain (xi. 26). Great sympathy is expressed for those in poverty. The ill consequences of it are brought out. It means the dislike of neighbours and alienation from friends (xiv. 20, xix. 4, 7). The poor man lacks protection. His very destitution is his destruction (x. 15). He must humbly entreat others (xviii. 23), and he may become even the slave of him from whom he has borrowed (xi. 29, xii. 24, xxii. 7, xiii. 8?). Some of the causes of poverty are mentioned: Idleness (vi. 6–11, x. 4, xii. 24, xxiv. 30 ff.), the following of purposeless pursuits (xii. 11, xxviii. 19), unwillingness to listen to instruction (xiii. 18), wine-drinking (xxiii. 20–1), oppression by others (xxviii. 3, xxix. 13, xxx. 14, xxii. 16?). God is impartial; He is the Maker, the giver of the light of life to both rich and poor. All men, as such, no matter what their position in life, have their rights (xxii. 2, xxix. 13). To pity the needy is in reality an act of service to God (xix. 17; cf. the words of Jesus in Matt. xxv. 31–46), and any reproach offered to them is one upon their Creator (xiv. 31, xvii. 5). And yet corporal punishment for slaves is recommended; there must be no pampering (xxix. 19, 21; cf. Ecclus. xxxiii. 24–31).

(3) The Sages fully realized the great advantages of Wealth. It creates universal friendships for its possessor (xiv. 20, xix. 4, 6), gives him power among both the lowly and the great (xviii, 16, 23, xxii. 29), and is of the utmost assistance and protection (x. 15, xiii. 8, xvii. 8, xviii. 11, xxi. 14). Far better to be of little social standing, but in comfortable circumstances, than a poverty-stricken show of position (xii. 9). The rich are to be generous with their abundance, especially to those in need (xi. 24–5, xix. 17, xxi. 26, xxii. 9, xxviii. 27). But wealth must not be unduly sought after or made the object of trust. Riches have wings

(xi. 28, xviii. 11, xxiii. 4 f. [=Amen-em-ope], xxviii. 20). Better is righteousness (x. 2, xi. 4, 28, xvi. 8), or wisdom (xvi. 16, xx. 15, xxviii. 11), or an honourable reputation (xxii. 1). Preferable it is to be poor than perverse and wicked amidst riches dishonourably obtained (xvi. 8, xix. 1, 22, xxviii. 6). Such wealth brings a harvest of sin, trouble, and destruction. It is unsure, and amassed for the use of the good in the end (x. 2, xiii. 11, 22, 23 ?, xv. 6, 27, xvi. 19, xx. 21, xxi. 6, xxii. 8, 16, xxviii. 8, 20, 22). Worthy of mention is the LXX addition to xvii. 6 : ' The whole world of wealth belongs to the faithful man, but to the faithless not an obol.' Moderate means—neither poverty nor riches —with contentment, love, and, above all, the fear of the Lord, are much to be preferred to riches with strife and bitterness (xv. 16 f., xvii. 1, xxx. 7–9). While the prosperity that is permanently sure and without sorrow is due to the blessing of Yahweh (x. 22 ; ct. xix. 14), and is a reward for the fear of, and trust in, Him (xxii. 4, xxviii. 25), it is obtained by righteousness (xv. 6 ; xiii. 23, LXX), wisdom (xiv. 24, xxi. 20, xxiv. 3–4), diligence, and toil (x. 4, xii. 11, xiii. 4, xiii. 11, xiv. 4, 23, xxvii. 23 ff.), from a father (xix. 14). It may come through oppression and injustice (xi. 16, xvi. 8), but such is unsure.

Religion applies to the market-place. Business may be sacred, a divine calling. Just balances and scales are the Lord's (xvi. 11) ; false weights and measures are abominations to Him (xi. 1, xx. 10, 23 ; cf. Deut. xxv. 13–16). The man of greedy spirit stirs up ill feeling (xxviii. 25). ' Bad, bad, says the buyer ; but when he is gone, then he boasts ' (xx. 14). Thus the smart business man beating down the seller.

(4) Against sins of the flesh there are special warnings. Avoid Gluttony and those who practise it (xxviii. 7, xxv. 16, xxiii. 20, xxiii. 2–3 [=Amen-em-ope]). Wine is commended on certain occasions of physical and mental trouble, but Drunkenness is

ruinous (xii. 11, LXX; xx. 1, xxi. 17, xxiii. 20 f., xxiii. 29–35, xxxi. 4–7). UNCHASTITY and consorting with prostitutes are severely censured, especially in chapters i.–ix. These ways are those of death (ii. 16–19, v. 3–20, vi. 24–35, vii. 5–27, ix. 13–18, xxii. 14, xxiii. 27 f., xxix. 3, xxx. 20, xxxi. 3). In vi. 26, if the harlot of the first clause be not the same as the married woman of the second, but the one is contrasted with the other, then the suggestion is that intercourse with the former (though not condoned) is less harmful than with the latter.

(5) IDLENESS was an abhorrence to the Sage. Diligence and INDUSTRY are to him great moral qualities. The lazy lounger comes to poverty and dishonour, industry is rewarded by prosperity and honour. Some of the barbed descriptions of the sluggard have become the commonplaces of present-day speech (i. 32, vi. 6–11, x. 4, 26, xii. 11, 24, 27, xiii. 4, xiv. 4, xviii. 9, xix. 15, 24, xx. 4, 13, xxi. 5, 25, xxii. 13, 29 [=Amen-em-ope], xxiv. 27, 30–4, xxvi. 13–16, xxvii. 23–7, xxviii. 19, xxxi. 27). Not without point of connexion with idleness are the warnings against MEDDLING with the affairs of others (xxvi. 17–18), and being too often on a neighbour's doorstep (xxv. 17).

(6) The angry and quarrelsome disposition is censured. ANGER inevitably means strife, hasty words, foolish conduct. The wise man will shun the one given to anger, and restrain his own spirit. 'He that is slow to anger is better than the mighty; and he that ruleth his spirit than he that taketh a city' (xvi. 32, x. 12, xii. 16, xiv. 17, 29, xv. 1, xv. 18, xvii. 14, xviii. 19?, xix. 11, 19, xx. 2 f., xxii. 24–5 [=Amen-em-ope], xxv. 8?, xxv. 28, xxvi. 21, xxvii. 4, xxix. 8, 11, 22, xxx. 32–3). Chapter xxv. 8–10 is probably a caution against gossip and tattling, but it may refer to the contentious spirit unduly eager to engage in litigation.

(7) An abomination to God is the MISCHIEF-MAKER, the sower of discord between friends, the deviser of

wicked imaginations which work evil against a neighbour (iii. 29–30, iv. 16, vi. 12–19, x. 23, xv. 26, xvi. 27–30, xix. 28). Not very different in spirit is the man who despises his fellow, proving his contempt by mocking speech, lack of kindly feeling and practical sympathy in time of need (xxi. 10, xi. 12, xiv. 21).

The man so base as to return evil for good will find sure retribution (xvii. 13). Injuries are to be FORGIVEN. It is wrong to say, 'I will do so to him as he hath done to me.' Revenge and retaliation are set aside (x. 12, xviii. 19 ?, xix. 11, xx. 22, xxiv. 29[1]). It is impious to be glad at calamity (xvii. 5), even if the misfortunes are those of an ENEMY. Such malice displeases God (xxiv. 17). The hungry and thirsty enemy is to be provided with food and drink (xxv. 21–2 ; cf. Job xxxi. 29 ; Rom. xii. 20 ; Matt. v. 44 ; also see xvi. 7). 'Heaping coals of fire' upon an enemy's head may possibly mean that he will feel such humiliation and remorse that it but intensifies the pleasure and vengeance of the injured man. But probably we are to take it as signifying a noble vengeance, such a one as purifies and turns an enemy into a friend. At the same time, in neither xxiv. 17 nor xxv. 22 is there presented the highest motive for forgiveness. In the one it is the fear of the divine anger, in the other His reward. But since in Lev. xix. 18 only Jews are in mind, our passage is more universal.

(8) The SCORNERS receive special condemnation. They defy God, are cynical of the good and true, contemptuous disregarders of moral and religious laws, haughty and self-sufficient despisers of correction (i. 22, iii. 34, ix. 7 f., 12, xiii. 1, xiv. 6, 9, xv. 12, xix. 25–9, xx. 1, xxi. 11, 24, xxii. 10, xxiv. 9). Likewise detestable is the allied spirit of PRIDE. Self-conceit, arrogance, is an abomination to God. Trust Him rather than one's own understanding. Be lowly and

[1] H. P. Smith thinks that the reason for the exhortation may be that to take notice of a slight is unworthy of a gentleman. This seems to be reading a lower meaning into the words (*Enc. Rel. Ethics*, vi. 77).

EB

humble. HUMILITY and the fear of the Lord issue in riches, honour, and life (iii. 5–7, vi. 17, viii. 13, xi. 2, xii. 15, xiii. 10, xiv. 3, 16, xv. 25, 33, xvi. 5, 18 f., xvii. 19, xviii. 12, xxi. 4, 24, xxii. 4, xxv. 14, xxvi. 5, 12, xxvii. 2, xxviii. 11, 26, xxix. 23, xxx. 13). ENVY is rottenness of the bones (xiv. 30) ; and to envy the wicked, even when they seem to prosper, is folly (iii. 31, xxiii. 17, xxiv. 1, 19). The deadly effects of a husband's jealousy are pictured in vi. 34 and xxvii. 4.

(9) BRIBERY, by which he seeks to pervert judgement, is another mark of the wicked man (xvii. 8, 23, xxi. 14). An abomination to God is the judge who upholds the wicked and condemns the good (xvii. 15, 26, xviii. 5, xxiv. 23–4, xxviii. 21).

(10) There is fine recognition of the power of THE TONGUE for good or evil.[1] It may prove a snare, a mischief-maker, or a means of spreading healthful life (x. 14, 20, 31–2, xi. 11 f., xii. 13, 14, 18, xiii. 3, xiv. 3, xv. 4, 23, xvii. 20, 28, xviii. 4, 6 f., 20 f., xxi. 23, 28, xxii. 11, 18, xxiii. 16, xxv. 15). Some specific sins are trenchantly dealt with : TALE-BEARING, backbiting, the whispering of secrets, which dissolves friendships (xi. 13, xvi. 28, xvii. 9, xx. 19, xxv. 9, 23, xxvi. 20, 22). Closely allied is deliberate and malignant SLANDER, destructive of the character of a neighbour (x. 18, vi. 12, 19, xi. 9, xii. 6, xv. 28, xvi. 28, xxx. 10). Again, vitally connected are LYING and FALSE-WITNESS : 'Lying lips are an abomination to the Lord ; but they that deal truly are His delight' (xii. 22, viii. 8, ix. 12, LXX ; vi. 17, 19, xii. 17, 19 f., xiv. 5, 8, 25, xiii. 5, xvii. 4 f., 7, xix. 1, 5, 9, 22, 28, xx. 17, xxi. 28 f., xxiv. 28, xxv. 14, 18, xxvi. 19, 23–8). FLATTERY works ruin (xxvi. 28, xxviii. 23, xxix. 5). TALKATIVENESS is dangerous (x. 8, 19, xiii. 3, xiv. 7, 23, 33, xv. 2, xviii. 2, 7, xvii. 27 f.). So also is HASTY and INCONSIDERATE SPEECH (xii. 16, 18, 23, xviii. 13, xxix. 20) and rash religious

[1] Cf. Horton, *The Book of Proverbs*, chapter xii.

Vows (xx. 25). Grievous words breed anger and wound the heart (xv. 1, 4), and anger, temper, loss of self-control, are fruitful causes of evil strife and contention (x. 19, xii. 16, 18, xvii. 27, xix. 7, LXX; xxvi. 20 f., xxix. 11, xxx. 32 f.).

But while the tongue may be 'a restless evil, full of deadly poison,' it can also be a fountain of blessing, uttering speech which is HEALTHFUL, kind, acceptable, sympathetic, joy-bringing, wise, instructive, helpful (x. 21, 31 f., xii. 18, 25 f., xv. 1, 2, 4, 7, 18, 23, 26, 28, xvi. 21, 23 f., xvii. 27 f., xx. 15, xxiv. 25 f., xxxi. 26). WISE REPROOF is better than flattery (ix. 8, xii. 1, xxiv. 25, xxv. 12, xxvii. 5, xxviii. 23). But words must be in due season, tactful, and opportune (xv. 23, xxiii. 9, xxv. 11–12, 20).

(11) The Wise Men condemn NIGGARDLINESS, the stingy, ungenerous, inhospitable spirit (xxiii. 6–8 [=Amen-em-ope], xxviii. 22). LIBERALITY, the quality of generosity, is blessed (iii. 27 f., xi. 25, xix. 17, xxi. 26, xxii. 9, xxviii. 27). Kindness to animals is commended (xii. 10; cf. Jonah iv. 11), and especially KINDNESS and mercy towards one's fellows (iii. 3, xi. 17, xix. 22, xx. 28, xxxi. 26). The exhortations may not reach the sublime heights of the teaching of Jesus, but they are of a high order, and, as we have already seen, even enemies are to be kindly treated. Kindness and truth, or faithfulness, are several times associated (iii. 3, xiv. 22, xvi. 6, xx. 28), and once kindness and righteousness (xxi. 21).

(12) The Sages exalt FAITHFULNESS, trustworthiness, candour, as a witness, friend, messenger, &c. (xi. 13, xii. 17, 22, xiii. 17, xiv. 5, xxv. 13, xxvii. 6, xxviii. 20, xxix. 14). But, alas! 'a faithful man who can find?' (xx. 6). Like all gnomic writers, our writers dwell on the advantages of FRIENDSHIP. Unsociableness, the misanthropic spirit of isolation from the life of one's fellows and society, is blamed: 'He who separateth

himself seeketh [his own] desire and quarrelleth with all sound wisdom' (xviii. 1[1]; but the Hebrew is doubtful). On the other hand, it is a mistake to be always on another's doorstep (xxv. 17). Genuine friends are untold blessings. They help in times of trouble and difficulty (xvii. 17), and may prove even better than relatives (xviii. 24, xxvii. 10, xvii. 17?; cf. xviii. 19, xix. 7). Friendly intercourse tends to sharpen the wits (xxvii. 17), and is sweet and sympathetic contact (xxvii. 9, 19). The wounds of a true friend are faithful (xxvii. 6); for sincere rebuke is better than flattery (xxv. 12, xxvii. 5 f., xxviii. 23), and readiness to accept sincere and deserved reproof is the mark of the wise man (ix. 8).

Old friends are to be retained (xxvii. 10; cf. Ben Sira ix. 10). One passage, xviii. 24, 'There are friends who only seek society [so Toy]; but there is a friend who sticks closer than a brother,' contrasts the genuine friend with the fair-weather one who seeks intercourse only for the sake of society. A good friend will overlook faults (x. 12, xvii. 9). Since bad friends prove ruinous owing to their insincerity and untrustworthiness, care should be exercised in the choice of those with whom fellowship is sought. Youth must seek the companionship of the wise (xiii. 20, xx. 6, xxii. 24–5 [=Amen-em-ope], xxiv. 1, xxvi. 25, xxvii. 6, 14).

(13) There are strong warnings against SURETYSHIP. 'My son, if thou art become surety for thy neighbour, if thou hast stricken hands for another,[2] thou art snared with the words of thy mouth' (vi. 1 ff.);

[1] Horton, op. cit., p. 241, finely quotes the words of Richard III in Shakespeare:

> 'I have no brother, I am like no brother;
> And this word—love—which greybeards call divine,
> Be resident in men like one another,
> And not in me; I am myself alone.'

[2] The R.V. 'stranger' conveys a wrong impression. The word in the Hebrew refers simply to one of another household, any one with whom business is conducted, synonymous rather than contrasted with 'neighbour' of the first clause.

'He that hateth suretyship is sure' (xi. 15; cf. xvii. 18, xx. 16, xxii. 26–7,[1] xxvii. 13; contrast Ben Sira viii. 13, xxix. 14–17). Ben Sira seems to occupy higher ground than our Sages: 'A good man will be surety for his neighbour, and he that hath lost shame will fail him' (xxix. 14). But men who exalt true friendship as they do would hardly have denied that on occasions such worldly wise and prudential considerations must be set on one side. A true friend sticks closer than a brother, and a brother is born for adversity (xviii. 24, xvii. 17). The Wise Men faced facts. They had young men in mind whose impulses might lead them to take risks they could not afford. To go security for another whose failure might mean the distraining of all one's property, or being sold along with wife and children as slaves, was an assumption of obligations too great to be thoughtlessly undertaken. For such suretyship is folly.

(14) The foot must be removed from the paths of Temptation. All evil, and the men who practise it, are to be avoided (iv. 25–7, xxiv. 1–2). Purity of Heart should be diligently sought. Let the thoughts be guarded; for on this depend (or, 'out of it,' i.e. the heart) the issues of life (iv. 23, xxi. 8, xxii. 11). The truly good man seeks only good, and wins the favour of God and men (xi. 23, 27). Love is another mark of the good man. It is forgiving; 'It covereth transgressions' (x. 12, xvii. 9; cf. 1 Pet. iv. 8). Better poverty with it than wealth without it (xv. 17). And yet love which fails to reprove when such is necessary is morally valueless (xxvii. 5). Joyfulness is encouraged. 'A merry heart is a good medicine, but a broken spirit dries up the bones' (xvii. 22, xv. 13, 15). And wonderfully joy-bringing is good news (xv. 30, xxv. 25).

(15) Righteousness is often praised. It is that general rectitude of those who live in obedience to the

[1] There is no parallel in Amen-em-ope.

ideals taught by the Wise Men. It is not a special virtue. The righteous are the good, upright men, avoiding the sins condemned and following the virtues commended. Absolute sinlessness is not in mind. Sin is universal (xx. 9). A few selected references are : i. 3, ii. 9, 20, viii. 18, ix. 9, x. 11, 20, xi. 4–6, 30, xv. 9, xvi. 31, xxi. 3, 15, xxix. 7, 27, xxxi. 9.

Length of Days, a ripe old age, is a crown of glory gained by righteous living (iii. 2, 16, x. 27, xvi. 31, xx. 29). The time of the wicked is short (ii. 22, xii. 7, 28, xxiv. 16 ; cf. Ps. lv. 23).

(16) The State. If xxvii. 8 refers to an exile in a foreign land as being ' like a bird that wanders from her nest,' then we see that the Sage, in spite of his universal outlook, did love his motherland. Whether this is the meaning or not, he knows full well the significance of goodness for national prosperity. Righteousness exalteth a nation ; godlessness ruins the State (xi. 11, xiv. 34, xxviii. 12, xxix. 2, 8, 16, 18). Wise guidance is essential for the safety of a people (xi. 14, xx. 18, xxiv. 6, xxviii. 2). Pupils are warned against those who rashly make revolution against constituted authority (xvii. 11, xxiv. 21–2).

With respect to the King, the Sages realize the havoc caused to land and people by the weakness, insolence, folly, cruelty, intemperance, untruthfulness, wickedness, and contempt of good counsel on the part of the ruler (xiv. 28, xv. 22, xvii. 7, xx. 2, xxiii. 1–3 [cf. Amen-em-ope], xxviii. 2, 12, 15–16, xxix. 2–4, 12, xxx. 22, xxxi. 2–8). The other side of the picture is presented, especially in B (x. 1–xxii. 16). The characteristics of the good ruler are finely portrayed—his dependence upon God, his righteousness, wisdom, truthfulness, mercy, a helper in time of need, the reverenced fountain of prosperity to his subjects (viii. 15–16, xiv. 28, 34 f., xvi. 10, 12–15, xix. 12, xx. 1, 8, 26, 28, xxi. 1, xxii. 11, xxv. 2–7, xxix. 4, 14, xxxi. 1–9).

(17) Woman. A prudent wife is the gift and special

favour of God (xviii. 22, xix. 14), a helpmeet of inestimable value (i. 8, v. 19, vi. 20, xi. 16, xii. 4, xiv. 1, xxxi. 10–31). The virtues praised are industry, diligence, loyalty, shrewdness and wisdom in counsel, charitableness, dignity, intelligence, perfection as housewife, faithfulness to the interests of her husband. It is to be noted that the view of woman is mainly utilitarian. She is richly dressed, but, after all, the good woman is the perfect housewife and business manager who provides for her husband leisure for public duties. Verses 28–9 of chapter xxxi., however, suggest qualities less material. Ben Sira's conception is somewhat higher, with its insistence upon the companionship[1] of a wife as of greater value than that of children or friend (xl. 19, 23 ; cf. xxxvi. 22 ff.). The bad wife is the woman injudicious, garrulous, contentious, fretful, odious, shrewish, foolish, adulterous, &c. (ii. 17, vii. 19, xi. 22, xii. 4, xiv. 1, xix. 13, xxi. 9, 19, xxv. 24, xxvii. 15 f., xxx. 20, 23). Polygamy is ignored, monogamy taken for granted. Fidelity to the marriage vow is emphasized (v. 15–20). In contrast, it is noteworthy that, with the exception of one uncertain passage, Amen-em-ope passes no judgement, good or bad, upon women.[2]

As for the Harlot and Adulteress, young men especially are warned against them. Association with degraded servants of lust, who were probably married women (ii. 17, vii. 19), is to walk the way of death (ii. 16–19, v. 3–20, vi. 24 ff., vii. 25–7, xxii. 14, xxiii. 27–8). The warnings against unchastity, it is to be noted, are addressed to men only. The woman in Proverbs is not the seduced, but the temptress, and man the one led astray. That man is in any way to blame for the existence of harlotry is ignored. Possibly, as Toy thinks, the Sages also felt that, since women

[1] But i. 8, vi. 20, xxxi. 26, suggest a teaching function, and it can hardly be supposed that the Sages failed to recognize her as a companion to her husband.

[2] Cf. Oesterley, *The Wisdom of Egypt and the Old Testament*, p. 39.

lived in spheres which were socially confined, they were less liable to temptation than men, but a more likely reason is that they were not held in the same moral importance as men.

(18) Obedience and acceptance of parental instruction are due from CHILDREN to PARENTS (i. 8–9, iii. 1 ff., iv. 1 ff., vi. 20, vii. 1 f., xii. 1, xiii. 1, xxiii. 22, xxx. 17), as also reverence (xv. 20, xx. 20, xxx. 17). Parents (or teachers, as it is sometimes difficult to decide whether the instructor is father or sage) find joy or sorrow in the conduct of their children : ' A wise son maketh a glad father, but a foolish son is the heaviness of his mother ' (x. 1, xv. 20, xvii. 21, 25, xxiii. 15, 24 f., xxvii. 11, xxix. 3, 15, 17). Some sins against parents specially reprobated are mocking, despising, using violence (xix. 26, xxx. 17), cursing (xx. 20, xxx. 11), scorning of instruction (xiii. 1, xv. 5), robbery (xxviii. 24). Parents and children are ornaments one of the other ; ' Children's children are the crown of old men, and the glory of children are their fathers ' (xvii. 6) ; and a man of probity causes his children to inherit blessings (xx. 7).

(19) EDUCATION.[1] Though intimately related to later sections on Religion and Wisdom, it will be convenient to take this now. Remember that folly is the equivalent to being uneducated in the eyes of the Sages, and also that the wisdom of the Wise Man—the man really educated—is grounded in the knowledge of God. Folly, the *lack of education*, is indicated by many marks : careless ease and negligence in vital affairs (i. 32) ; slander (x. 18) ; contempt of wisdom and discipline (i. 7, 22, xv. 5, xviii. 2) ; inability to learn, either by experience or otherwise (xxvi. 11), hence to attempt the instruction of the fool is folly, and useless (xvi. 22, xxiv. 7, xxvii. 22) ; unskilled speech (xxvi. 7–9) ; fault-finding with God (xix. 3) ; trusting in self rather

[1] Cf. W. R. Harper, *The Work of the Old Testament Sages*, p. 19. An excellent classification of the teaching of Proverbs. Much more elaborate is that of Kent and Burrows, *Proverbs and Didactic Poems*, pp. 45 ff.

than in God (xxviii. 26) ; destruction of prosperity (xiv. 1 f.) ; lack of discretion (xii. 23, xv. 2, 14, xviii. 2) ; running needlessly into danger and ills of all kinds (xxii. 3, xxvii. 12) ; unfaithfulness in duty and unworthiness of honour (xxvi. 6, 8) ; incapacity to concentrate the energies (xvii. 24) ; burdensomeness to others (xxvii. 3, xxix. 9), and specially so when prosperous (xix. 10, xxx. 23) ; quarrelsomeness (xx. 3, xxix. 11) ; licentiousness (vii. 22) ; mock at guilt (xiv. 9 ?) ; love of doing wickedness (x. 23) ; mischief-making and dangerous (xvii. 12 f., xxiv. 8–9). Men of this type are right in their own eyes (xii. 15), but, by refusing instruction, show that they despise their own souls (xv. 32). Listening to Madam Folly, they are led to death, disregarded and mocked in the day of their calamity (i. 24–32, ix. 18). (Added to these as proofs of folly should be the faults and sins previously mentioned.)

The aim of education is the child's true welfare, when maturity has been reached (xxii. 6), through the acquisition of knowledge, understanding, wisdom, by listening to instruction (i. 2–7, iv. 1–7, x. 14, xiv. 33, xv. 14, xvii. 16, xviii. 15, xxiii. 23). Of far less value is material prosperity (iii. 15, viii. 11, xvi. 16, xvii. 16 ; cf. xxiii. 23). Conduct, rightdoing, will prove the serious reception of instruction (xx. 11). To get wisdom is the principal thing (iv. 7, vii. 4, xiii. 20, xxiv. 14) ; and, as will be seen later, the fundamental principle of it is the fear of the Lord (i. 7, ix. 10, xiv. 26, xv. 33, xxx. 3). To the Sages, genuine culture is broadly based on religion, on obedience to God.

The *instructors* were, first of all, the parents. Home training was of primary importance. Although the more theoretical aspects of teaching were the care of the father, the influence of the mother is fully recognized (i. 8, iv. 1–4, vi. 20, xiii. 1, xxii. 6, xxiii. 22, xxx. 17). From the parents, the children, probably of the more well-to-do classes, passed into the hands of the Wise Men, the professional teachers so important in later

Israel (i. 6, v. 13, xii. 18, xiii. 14, 20, xv. 2, 7, 12, xvi. 23, xviii. 4, xxii. 17, xxiv. 23, &c.). But God was the supreme Teacher (iii. 11 ff.).

Much is said in Proverbs of character as the product of severe *discipline.*[1] Some modern systems of education would hardly have appealed to these Jews, who, however, made men of their charges. Words of reproof and correction are exceedingly common. The wise man proves his wisdom by heeding rebuke, the fool disregards it (xiii. 1, 18, xv. 5, 31 f., xvii. 10, xxv. 12). With respect to method, to a good pupil moral suasion is better than stripes (xvii. 10). Yet, if necessary, discipline must be stern. A parent may be too harsh (so perhaps xix. 18), but strong measures of chastisement may be essential to meet the case : 'Spare the rod and spoil the child' (xiii. 24, xix. 18, xx. 30, xxii. 15, xxiii. 13 f., xxix. 15–17 ; cf. Ben Sira xxx. 1 ff.). Such severe correction is really proof of affection. Compare the Greek Menander (662 Kock), 'The harshest man, admonishing his son, is bitter in words, but in deed is a father.'

The attitude of pupils should be that of reverent acceptance of admonition (i. 3, iv. 10 ff., viii. 10, 33, xii. 1, 15, xiii. 10, xv. 31, xix. 20, xxiii. 12). Some, however, it seems impossible to discipline. Reproof and chastening apparently leave them unimproved ; for example, the unwise and scorners (i. 7, v. 12, 23, ix. 7, x. 17, xii. 1, xiii. 1, 18, xiv. 6, xv. 5, 12, xvi. 22, xxvi. 12, xxvii. 22, xxiv. 7?).

The results of education are to be seen in all the graces and qualities commended by the Sages, so many of which have already been given. To be instructed is to possess wisdom. More specifically to be noted are these : Something has been acquired of vastly more importance than wealth (viii. 11, xvi. 16, xvii. 16, xxiii. 23, xxviii. 11). It issues in strength (xxiv. 5) ; guides its possessor to right and discreet speech (v. 2,

[1] Cf. George Adam Smith's *Modern Criticism and the Preaching of the Old Testament*, pp. 304 ff.

xiv. 3, xv. 2, 7, xvi. 23, xviii. 4), and in general gives that discernment, practical sagacity, knowledge of things, and, above all, knowledge of God, which from one point of view is wisdom, from another the result of it. To be wise is to walk in ways of happiness (iii. 13–15, 17), to secure favour (xiii. 15), honour and glory (iii. 16, 35, iv. 8 f., xiii. 18), to receive wealth (iii. 16, xiv. 24, xxi. 20, xxiv. 3 f.). It means successful issue in war (xxi. 22, xxiv. 6), protection and guidance when tempted (ii. 9–20, xiii. 14), security and preservation by day and night (i. 33, ii. 21, iii. 21–5, iv. 5–6, xxviii. 26). And if the R.V. of xi. 30 is correct (which, however, is doubtful), the wise man will win souls, prove the power of wisdom to gain others for itself. Thus, in following wisdom, there is attained by the educated man true life—that is, a long, peaceful, happy, and prosperous life in this world ; a life in which physical, social, intellectual, moral, and spiritual qualities blend in harmony.

(*b*) Religious Ideas

(1) Wisdom—Human and Divine[1]

In Proverbs, *wisdom* is (*a*) a human quality, (*b*) a divine quality or energy of God, (*c*) a personification as divine Wisdom,[1] perhaps (to some scholars), even more, a personal Being. Dealing first with (*a*), it is to be again remarked that all the virtues commended and the faults condemned by the Sages are indications of wisdom and its opposite, folly. It means wise knowledge of the world, the capacity to judge circumstances with discrimination and insight manifested in the right choice, far-sighted planning, and clear-headed practical prudence which issue in a long, happy, and prosperous life. It is not, however, a purely intellectual quality ; for it has a religious content, and is founded upon religious illumination. It has been described as ' a finite likeness of the Wisdom of God,' being a sort of human reflection of the divine. Not only is it

[1] Brown, Driver, and Briggs, *Lexicon*, p. 315.

acquaintance with a mass of knowledge ; it is also an attitude of the religious spirit. To possess it is to have the ability to grasp the purposes of God as far as man may, to live in obedience to His commands, and to apply systematically the higher divine law to the practical affairs of life. It is more than a natural[1] ability (ii. 5–10 ; cf. Ben Sira vi. 22 ; Wisd. of Sol. i. 4) ; for it is regarded as the direct gift of God, originating from the same source as divine Wisdom, and bestowed most generously upon man. It comes from fellowship between the mind of God and that of man, and enters as an effective inward director into the souls of those who show towards Him the reverence due. 'The Wisdom by which man is to be guided in all the affairs of this lower life is substantially one with that which moved and guided the divine Mind in those first thoughts which gave rise to the being and order of the universe itself. Wisdom such as man needs, and may have for his guide, is not human ; it is divine. It is not temporal ; it is eternal.'[2]

The opposite to wisdom is *folly*. This also is an ethical-religious conception.[3] Far more than merely intellectual aberration and incapacity is in mind. Folly to the Wise Men is the quality exhibited by one unintelligently selfish, the stupid dullard not recognizing and appreciating the laws of divine Wisdom, one without capacity for making moral distinctions, one credulous and lacking in insight and tact, one so feeble in character or so obstinate and reckless in spirit as not to profit by instruction and experience—the man, in short, failing to conform his life to the laws of God so as to live worthily and successfully. In only a few passages (xix. 25, xxi. 11, xxvi. 12, xxix. 20) is hope for the fool expressed. Generally he is regarded as incurable.[4]

[1] Cf. *Enc. Biblica*, pp. 5329, 3916.
[2] Davison, *The Wisdom Literature of the Old Testament*, p. 148.
[3] See in the *Lexicon* : בַּעַר, פֶּתִי, נָבָל, אֱוִיל, כְּסִיל.
[4] But see Oesterley, *Commentary*, pp. 163, lxxxv. f.

As was natural, ' wisdom ' came to be later (cf. Ben Sira xix. 20–4, xxiv. 23) identified with obedience to the Mosaic Law. A step towards this is seen in our book, where it is based upon fear of the Lord.

(*b*) ' Wisdom ' is also, in Proverbs, a divine quality, or energy. In iii. 19 God is said to have founded the earth by wisdom. It is here only an attribute of God, neither personified nor hypostatized ; simply a principle on which the world was grounded and by which it is maintained.

(*c*) In chapter viii. the conception is loftier still—so boldly original in spiritual insight as to signify more than a touch of the prophetic spirit. Like our Lord, Wisdom stands in public places and cries aloud to men to listen (viii. 1–5 ; cf. i. 20 f., ix. 1–6). She declares the excellence of her wisdom. Those who understand, and are willing to accept the truth, will be able to recognize at once that her words are true (viii. 4–9)—a noble anticipation of John vii. 17 : ' If any man willeth to do His will, he shall know of the teaching, whether it be of God, or whether I speak from myself.' She confers gifts—instruction, knowledge, honour—far more precious than material wealth (viii. 10–11, 19). She is possessed of intelligence, knowledge, insight, counsel, skill, understanding, might, and by her the rulers of the world are guided in just government (viii. 12, 14–16). Loving, and accessible to those who seek her (viii. 17), on her friends and servants she bestows the rewards of wealth, honour, and prosperity (viii. 18 f., 21), and walks in paths of equity and justice (viii. 20).

Revelation is made of her primaeval origin. She was begotten[1] before all physical things, the first-born of the creatures of God (viii. 22–6), present when the universe was created (viii. 27–31), though it is uncertain whether she is regarded as actively sharing (cf. iii. 19 and Wisd. of Sol. vii. 22) in the work of creation or as only a sympathetic companion and onlooker. Verses 26

[1] See Burney in *Journal of Theological Studies*, January 1926.

and 30*a* support the latter idea, and probably the word rendered 'master-workman' in verse 30 should be slightly changed, and translated 'foster-child,' as in A.V.—'one brought up.' Like a child, she sports[1] before God, sharing with Him in the delight of His creative activity (viii. 30–1), yet finding her chief delight with the sons of men, her work being, above all, humanitarian (viii. 31). She appeals to men to hearken to her, promising those who do so the divine favour, wisdom, happiness, and life. Those who hate her are lovers of death (viii. 32–6 ; cf. i. 23 ff., ix. 1–18). It is clear that 'Wisdom' is represented as possessing the principal attributes and performing the work of God, as these are exhibited in the Old Testament. See also i. 20–31, ii. 10–22, iii. 13–18, ix. 1–6, xxii. 17, &c.

Is the divine Wisdom of chapter viii. a Person or a personification? Gregg,[2] following most students, regards it as a poetical personification of the qualities of God. 'In Proverbs (chapters i. ix.) the system of the universe, moral and physical, is regarded as a unity pervaded by an immanent God. Then the divine principles which manifest themselves in the life of the world are abstracted from God, their source, and these principles are viewed "as an articulated, organized whole, outside of God Himself, the expression of His mind, but having an existence of its own alongside of God." To this system of principles consciousness is attributed ; it is personified as Wisdom, in whom are summed up the principal attributes of God.' Thus there is no thought of a duality in the Godhead, an archetypal hypostasis emanating from God, a real personal existence apart from Him. The endowment of Wisdom with personal qualities is merely poetic and literary.

[1] See Davison, op. cit., pp. 150 f. : 'True gaiety of heart belongs to wisdom, not folly. In creation there is not only Mind, but Heart ; not only grave and profound purpose, but overflowing joy.'

[2] *The Wisdom of Solomon*, p. xxxii.

Other students find here more than poetry. Kautzsch[1] writes : 'This Wisdom is no longer a merely poetical personification, but a being which has come forth from God, and works independently by His side, or, more accurately, with Him. And, indeed, we are probably not mistaken if we see in it a hypostatization of the creative ideas—the passing into self-conscious personality of the system of archetypes, in accordance with which is determined the nature and measure of created things—as it were, the fundamental principle of the divine world-order.'

Others, of whom Fairweather[2] is a type, occupy a mediating position. The 'Wisdom' of chapter viii. 22 ff. is more than the divine attribute of wisdom, more than merely a literary personification of it. The thought is that of a real intermediate between God and the world, a separate subsistence created by God and existing alongside of Him in a special manner inapplicable to any of His attributes. And yet, while something more than an attribute, 'Wisdom' is something less than a hypostasis implying a duality within the Godhead. The Old Testament idea of the Spirit of God is very similar. The student, in reaching a decision, must also keep in mind the difference between the precise expression of modern philosophic thought and the very different language of the ancient Jewish Sage, which may have meant to him, even in his most vivid personal phraseology, not just what it does to us.[3] Nor must New Testament conceptions be read into the passage.

Is the Wisdom conception of chapter viii. of foreign origin? Some, who answer in the affirmative, think of Babylon.[4] Wisdom, who dwells in the primaeval

[1] Hastings' *D. B.* v. 729. Cf. iv. 925.

[2] *The Background of the Gospels*, pp. 84 f.; *D. B.* v. 281. Cf. *Enc. Rel. Eth.* vi. 255; Toy, op. cit., pp. 171, 181.

[3] Cf. Charles, *Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha of the Old Testament*, vol. i., p. 528, and Peake's *Commentary*, p. 345.

[4] Jeremias, *The Old Testament in the Light of the Ancient East*, vol. i., pp. 47, 105, 188, 191; vol. ii., p. 263.

deeps, suggests comparison with the Babylonian teaching, in which the Wisdom of Ea is represented as having her seat in *apsu*, the deep sea. Ishtar, sometimes regarded as the goddess of Wisdom and creatress of creatures, has been thought of. The Egyptian Isis has also been regarded as a likely prototype. Many students are more inclined to recognize the influence of Parseeism,[1] in which personifications are prominent. Most admit the influence of Greek thought. Siegfried[2] believes the conception in Proverbs of a separate existence outside of, and over against, God as so un-Israelitish in its inconsistency with monotheism as to be explicable only by connexion with the Platonic doctrine, in which Ideas are assigned an existence of their own, constituting a world of divine transcendental archetypes. Others cannot but admit the influence of Greek thought in the vivid personification, and the idea of the world as a cosmos, a unity, but this in combination with the essential Jewish monotheistic conceptions.[3]

Toy[4] is emphatic that such personifications of a divine quality as in Proverbs viii. is foreign to the Old Testament legal and prophetical books, and is of Greek origin. On the other hand, Holmes,[5] while agreeing that without Greek philosophy the personification in Proverbs would hardly have been such as it is, nevertheless finds the beginnings of it in such passages as Gen. i. 26, and Isa. lxiii. 10. Baudisson[6] rejects both Greek and early Hebrew influence, and points out the similarity of Proverbs viii. to the Haggadic creation of the later Rabbinic literature. Still others do not see why the Wisdom idea should not have sprung up without foreign help in Israel as soon as men of a religious mind began to ponder the phenomena of nature. The teachers of our Wise Man were not the

[1] Cf. *Enc. Biblica*, pp. 5441, 5330. [2] *D. B.* iv. 925.
[3] Toy, op. cit., p. 172 ; *E. R. E.* xii. 746.
[4] *Enc. Biblica*, pp. 3913, 5330. [5] Charles, op. cit., vol. i., p. 528.
[6] *D. B.* iv. 142.

Greeks, but prophets like Amos, Isaiah, Jeremiah, and the Deutero-Isaiah.[1]

The divine Wisdom conception of chapter viii. has been significantly fruitful in theology. The later developments, outside the scope of this volume, may be traced in Ben Sira (cf. chapters i. and xxiv.), the Wisdom of Solomon (chapters vii. f.), Enoch (xlii. 1, xlix. 1, lxxxiv. 3), Baruch (iii. 29 ff.), the Logos speculations of Philo, and even in the Odes of Solomon (xii. 9 ff., xiii. 1 ff., xvi. 9 ff.). Above all, the influence of it is notable in the Johannine Logos idea (i. 1–18 ; cf. viii. 58, xvii. 5) and the Pauline identification of Wisdom with Christ (1 Cor. i. 17–ii. 16 ; Col. i. 15 f., &c.[2]) having roots in the words of the Lord Himself (Matt. xi. 19, 25–30 ; Luke xi. 49). In the later Christological speculations, especially those of the Arian controversy concerning the nature of the Second Person of the Trinity, Proverbs viii. assumed great importance. But altogether apart from the later New Testament developments, the Jewish doctrine is full of the richest meaning. 'At the foundation of the writers' theology lay the idea of a *living* God, whom they were attempting to realize, not as transcendent only, but as immanent in the world. . . . If the one living and true God is to be brought into close relations and communion with His creatures, neither the abstractions of philosophy nor the language of mere transcendence will suffice. Hence we find, both within and without the Canonical Scriptures, a use of the terms "Word of God," "Spirit of God," or "Wisdom of God" as a supreme intermediary, preparing the way for the idea of Incarnation and the fuller revelation of the New Testament' (W. T. Davison).[3]

[1] G. A. Smith, *Modern Criticism and the Preaching of the Old Testament*, p. 288.

[2] *Dictionary of Christ and the Gospels*, vol. ii., p. 829.

[3] Peake's *Commentary*, p. 345.

(2) The Doctrine of God

The references to Wisdom have sometimes been termed ' philosophical ' rather than religious, the latter description being reserved for the more specific thought about God now to be expounded. There seems no valid ground for so clear a distinction. The Wisdom doctrine is certainly not philosophical in the Greek sense, but assuredly is the product of the true Hebrew religious spirit, whether at work on native or foreign ideas.

The belief of the Sages in God is unquestioning, their trust in Him calm and sure. The Wise Man may, like Agur, find the divine nature and procedure a mystery, but he is not disturbed by doubts as to His character and power. He is all-powerful, all-wise, and omnipresent (xv. 3, 11, xvi. 9, xvii. 3, xix. 21, xxi. 30, xxiv. 12, xxix. 26), the Creator of the world and of man, with all his faculties (iii. 19 f., viii., xiv. 31, xvi. 4, xx. 12, xxii. 2, xxix. 13), having absolute control of the universe, and with men completely dependent upon Him. He is the Master of man's thoughts (xvi. 1) and deeds (xvi. 9, xx. 24, xxi. 1), the Giver of success in war (xxi. 31), and in His hands is the arbitrament of the lot (xvi. 33). All that is is of His will, and due to His controlling purpose : ' The Lord hath made everything for its own end : yea, even the wicked for the day of evil ' (xvi. 4). Possibly the last clause means no more than the inevitability of the punishment of the wicked who choose to do evil ; it is hardly an assertion of arbitrary predestination to evil (cf. Eccles. vii. 29). That doctrine belongs to a later time. The Old Testament clearly recognizes the power of man to change his manner of life. All the exhortations of Proverbs assume it.

The work of God is unsearchable and mysterious, His nature incomprehensible (xxv. 2, xxx. 1–4). By Him the human heart is tried and weighed (v. 21, xv. 11, xvi. 2, xvii. 3, xxi. 2, xxiv. 12), and the deeds of men

rewarded or punished (iii. 33, x. 3, 22, 29, xii. 2, 14 ?, xvi. 4, xxiv. 12, xxv. 21 f.). He is loving towards those who seek to live righteously, this being proved even in His corrections (iii. 11–12, xv. 9), which ever have character in view. In viii. 17, divine Wisdom says : 'I love them that love Me.' Further, God is just (xvi. 11, iii. 32, xxi. 3), merciful to the penitent (xxviii. 13), the protector and friend of the poor and needy (xiv. 31, xvii. 5, xix. 17, xxii. 22–3, xxiii. 10–11 [=Amen-em-ope]). To the righteous, to those who regard Him with fear and trust He is a sure and steadfast helper and guide, the bestower of favour and blessings (iii. 6, 26, 33, xvi. 3, 7, x. 22, xviii. 10, 22, xx. 22, xxx. 5), spiritual and intellectual insight being among these gifts of His grace (xxviii. 5 ; cf. viii. 9 ; 1 John ii. 20 ; John vii. 17). The early prophetic stress on Yahweh as the God of Israel is transcended by the thought of Him as Friend of the individual man.

From man God demands right conduct. All the virtues already noticed are to be included here, but some are worthy of specific mention. 'Trust in the Lord with all thine heart, and lean not upon thine own understanding' (iii. 5 f. ; cf. xvi. 3, xxii. 19, xxix. 25). He is to be feared and reverenced (ix. 10, xxiii. 17), and His chastening patiently endured (iii. 11–12). First-fruits are to be offered to Him (iii. 9 f.), and wealth consecrated to His service. Before prayers may be answered, right character in the offerer is essential. 'The sacrifice of the wicked is an abomination to the Lord, but the prayer of the upright is His delight' (xv. 8 ; cf. xv. 29, xxviii. 9). For the forgiveness of sins, righteousness, mercy, and truth are of far more value than sacrifice. 'By mercy and truth iniquity is expiated' (xvi. 6 ; cf. xxi. 3, 27, xxviii. 13). The Sage here takes his stand with the prophets and the most spiritual psalmists (Hos. vi. 6 ; Mic. vi. 6–8 ; Amos v. 21 f. ; Jer. vi. 20, vii. 21–3 ; Isa. i. 11–17 ; Ps. xl. 6, l. 8 ff., li. 16 f. ; cf. 1 Sam. xv. 22).

The Agur section (xxx. 1 ff.) is worth quoting more fully :

I am wearied, O God, I am wearied ;
I am altogether spent.
I am a brute, and no man ;
I have nought of human intelligence.
No wisdom have I learned,
No knowledge I have of the Holy One.
Who is He that hath mounted to heaven, and come down,
That hath gathered the wind in His fists,
The waters hath wrapped in His cloak,
And established all ends of the earth ?
What is His name, and His son's name ;
If thou dost know ?

(xxx. 1–4, Gordon's trans.)

In such striking language does a Sage[1] express his sense of the incomprehensibility of God, the impossibility of the knowledge of Him or His methods. He knows that God is, that all the movements of the universe indicate His energizing presence. But of His relationships there is complete ignorance. Who is God ? What is He ? What is His name—that is, His nature and character ? What the name of His son ? All is dark. Agur reminds one of Koheleth. His meditations are vain. He is bewildered, baffled. God is a mystery. He is here at work, but His operations are so shrouded as to make it impossible for his mind, at any rate, to grasp their significance.

But if, as is probable, verses 5–6 are from the same writer, Agur's thought progressed. His spirit could not rest satisfied with negations :

Every word of God is tried :
He is a shield unto them that trust in Him [cf. Ps. xviii. 30].
Add thou not unto His words,
Lest He rebuke thee, and thou be found a liar.

Faith's certainties were not absent. The God unreachable by the mere exercise of human mind has

[1] The writer does not accept the view that these verses are only quoted by the Sage to be refuted in verses 5–6.

not left Himself altogether without contact with men. To psalmist and prophet has He revealed Himself (cf. Heb. i. 1), and He will protect those who trust in Him. Agur knows that God is accessible to the reverent and prayerful spirit, and his petition (7–9) is to be saved from vanity and lying, and so to preserve the golden mean between poverty and riches that he will not be arrogant when unduly prosperous, or be a thief when poor, and consequently bring the name of God into disrepute.

(3) The Doctrine of Man and Sin

Human life is so unstable that no one is sure of to-morrow (xxvii. 1). In nature and sympathies man is essentially the same everywhere (xxvii. 19). His desires are insatiable (xxvii. 20), while griefs and bitterness of heart are his which none can share (xiv. 10, 13). Good news proves health-giving (xv. 30, xxv. 25) ; a merry heart enlivens, sorrow breaks his spirit (xv. 13, 15). Hope fulfilled is life-giving, hopes deferred beget sickness of heart (xiii. 12, 19) ; and, when the human spirit is broken, what hope is there ? But with courage one may win through (xviii. 14). While a broken spirit dries up the bones, a merry heart is a good medicine. Mind and body are vitally interconnected (xvii. 22, xiv. 30).

To err is human ; often unwittingly man takes a way which seems right, but it leads to ruin (xiv. 12). The corruption of the human heart is universal (xx. 9). And yet man is not left without an inward guide. God's searchlight is set within the soul. 'The spirit of man is the lamp of the Lord, searching all the innermost parts of the belly' (xx. 27 ; cf. xxviii. 1). The name 'conscience' may be missing, no doubt owing to the fact that the Sages were not given to speculative ethics, but there is here fine recognition of it as inner witness and judge.[1] Moreover, since in viii. 9 the words of

[1] But cf. Oesterley, p. 174.

Wisdom are said to be 'all plain to those who understand, and right to those who find knowledge,' the verse is a striking Old Testament expression of the noble thought of John vii. 17 (cf. Matt. xiii. 11, 16) that he who is prepared to accept the truth will be enabled by the insight of his conscience to recognize it as such.

The Wise Men dealt rather with sins than with sin in the abstract. The vices already noted as being condemned are sufficient to indicate what were regarded as sins. Yet we ought to mention the vices specially named as abominations and hateful to God. These are: false weights and balances, pride, lying, justifying the wicked and condemning the righteous, mischief-making, sowing discord, impure thinking, murder, perverseness of heart, scoffing, the way of the wicked and their sacrifices (iii. 32, 34, vi. 16–19, xi. 1, 20, xii. 2, 22, xv. 8, 9, 25, xvi. 5, xvii. 15, xx. 10, 23).

As to the *consciousness* of sin, this does not find very clear and explicit expression except in the isolated passage, xx. 9: 'Who can say, I have made my heart clean, I am pure from sin?' Nevertheless, inherent sinfulness is assumed in many passages, and in xxviii. 14 the reference is probably not only to punishment, but to the dread of sinning itself. Sorrow for sin is not mentioned elsewhere, nor is there reference to the processes of change from wickedness to goodness. But the exhortations, especially those of chapters i.–ix., assume the possibility of conversion, and in xxviii. 13 it is said that mercy is obtainable on the confession and the forsaking of transgressions. But there are limits to the divine forbearance. For those who neglect the warnings of divine Wisdom, a time of distress will come when they will call upon her and find no mercy. Only her mocking laugh will be the response (i. 26, 28).

The Sages sharply divided men into two distinct classes—the good and bad, wise men and fools. Every man is in one or the other of these separated sections. Such hard and fast divisions do not appeal to our modern mind. Our experience would rather suggest

that all men are varying shades of grey than either white or black. But not so the Sages.[1] They ignored the shades in human character. Our precise psychological distinctions were unknown to them. The careful analysis and weighing of thoughts and impulses belong to a later time. No concessions were made by them to the condition of native character, temperament, and environment. Inward experiences as moulded by conflict with temptations or with the natural errors of ignorance were not considered. They looked at deeds only; for the thoughts of the heart could not be seen. Hence a man was judged from the external point of view. Acts alone came before them, and, according as these harmonized with or violated the law enjoined, the doers were held to be good men or bad. Their method was purely judicial.

(4) Virtue and Knowledge

It has been often remarked[2] that, in Proverbs, sin and righteousness are chiefly intellectual: 'To know wisdom and instruction; to discern the words of understanding; to receive instruction in wise conduct, in justice and probity and rectitude; to give prudence to the inexperienced, to the youth knowledge and insight' (i. 2–4). Virtue seems practically identified with knowledge. The good man is the practical sage, the wicked man is the fool. Wickedness is lack of understanding; ignorance is the essence of sin. In similar fashion to the Greek spirit, knowledge and rightdoing seem treated as the same things. The Wise Men's rule of life made prominent the intellectual grasp of truth and its practical acceptance. In the science of right living the insight of the intellect was central. Those who know, and only those, will do the right, inasmuch as they alone thoroughly realize the nature and effects of such conduct.

[1] Cf. Toy, *Commentary*, xiii., pp. 10, 27; *Enc. Biblica*, p. 5331.
[2] See Toy, *Commentary*, xvi., p. 6; *Enc. Biblica*, pp. 3912, 5328; *E. R. E.* x. 782, &c.

There is much to give colour to such conclusions. To the Sage, knowledge is reckoned essence of virtue. Upon right thinking and knowing rightdoing is founded. But Professor Toy can hardly be followed in so baldly and completely equating knowledge and obedience as the teaching of the book, and then regarding this as, under Greek influence, a departure from the prophetic spirit. The two are not really identical[1] ; and, further, the Wise Men have but presented more strongly the earlier view (see p. 19) that knowing is the necessary condition of right conduct. Moreover, religion is not simply intellectualized, for the fear of the Lord is the beginning and chief part of knowledge (i. 7, ix. 10) ; it is the very kernel and essence of it (xv. 33). By following divine Wisdom, true knowledge is obtained (chapters vii. and viii.). He who pursues the divine Wisdom and fears God will know what to do and say, having within an instructed and efficient guide. The essence of Wisdom is explicit obedience to the divine Law, which to the Sages was the perfect exposition of truth and of the duties of living. True knowledge is the practical understanding and acceptance of the commands of God as the law of life.

(5) Rewards and Punishments

Rewards and punishments are in this life, and according to works. Virtue and vice never go unrewarded or punished here and now. No wrongdoing escapes retributive justice. If the righteous be punished on earth when they fall into sin, how much more the wicked and the sinner ! (xi. 31). The rewards offered are : riches, honour, success, length of days, health, permanency in the land, deliverance from death, happiness, good repute, life ; in general, earthly prosperity. Retribution shows in : disgrace, danger,

[1] 'Socrates says that knowledge is virtue, Solomon that virtue is knowledge. The Greek philosopher laid it down that no one can knowingly be evil, the Jewish teacher that no evil man can attain true wisdom' (W. T. Davison, op. cit., p. 12).

loss of various kinds, rooting out of a land, varying ills, poverty, mischief, early death, ill health, bad repute, &c. The wicked are created for the day of evil (xvi. 4). The following passages, selected out of many, will furnish sufficient illustration : ii. 21 f., iii. 8, 10, 16, iv. 4, x. 2, 3, 7, 25, 27, 28, 30, xi. 8, 18, 21, 31, xii. 21, xiii. 21, 25, xxi. 21, xxii. 4. In viii. 18 and xxi. 21, righteousness seems strangely to be the reward of goodness. But in the former the word צְדָקָה probably means 'just measure of fortune' = 'prosperity,' and in the latter verse it is probable that the second 'righteousness' should be deleted, because it spoils the balance of the clauses, is absent from the LXX, and as it stands is without meaning.

(6) No Problem of Suffering or Doctrine of Immortality

Since goodness and badness never fail to receive recompense here, there is no problem of unpunished sin and undeserved suffering in our book. It is recognized in such proverbs as xi. 8, xii. 13, and xvii. 26 that the righteous may have troubles, or be wrongly treated, but such suffering is but temporary. In iii. 11 f., deepened experience and the progress of moral reflection suggest an exception to the general rule. The righteous may have to endure sufferings which are the disciplinary chastening of divine love rather than merely punitive : 'My son, despise not the chastening of the Lord, neither be weary of His reproof : for whom the Lord loveth He reproveth ; even as a father the son in whom he delighteth.'[1] It is the same thought

[1] Regarding these verses as by a later hand, Professor S. H. Hooke (Peake's *Commentary*, p. 399) argues that 'chastisement could not be regarded as a proof of God's love until a belief in a future life with God, where its results should appear, had been established.' It may be granted that such a teaching had to wait for the acceptance of the doctrine of ethical immortality before its full meaning could be realized, but surely the chastening of divine love could have been taught even though no other life than this was reckoned with. Is it not suggested in Hos. vi. 1 ; Deut. xxxii. 39 ; Isa. xxx. 26 ; Amos iv. 6–11 ?

as that of Job v. 17 f. and xxxiii. 19 ff., &c. ; in fact, there seems some connexion between the first passage and that in Proverbs. Cf. also Heb. xii. 5 f. The Sages, however, find no real signs—or they deliberately ignore them—of dissatisfaction with the divine control of the world. Pessimism is unknown. Happiness is possible for all.[1] The problem of undeserved pain or the prosperity of the wicked is left untouched. The orthodoxy is unquestioning : Be pious and you will prosper here and now ; wickedness will surely end in ruin. Any prosperity the unrighteous may seem to have is but temporary, they are not to be envied (iii. 31 f. ; xxiii. 17 f. ; xxiv. 1, 19 f.).

Some passages (v. 5, x. 7, 25, 28, xi. 4, 7, xii. 28, xiv. 32, xv. 24, xxiii. 18, xxiv. 20) have been held to teach rewards and retribution in an after-life. But modern scholars[2] rightly show that other interpretations are more probable. In xiv. 32 the Hebrew text is clear : 'The righteous has hope in his death' ; but a very slight change gives the reading presupposed by the Septuagint : 'The righteous hath a refuge in his integrity.' In our book is the ordinary Hebrew belief in Sheol, the cheerless place of the dead, from which there is no return, and in which there are no moral distinctions (i. 12, ii. 18 f., v. 5, vii. 27). One passage, however, marks an advance on common conceptions ; for, according to these, the dead in Sheol were cut off from all relationship to God (Isa. xxxviii. 18 f. ; Ps. vi. 5, lxxxviii. 5) ; Yahweh has nothing to do with the under-world. In xv. 11, Sheol and Abaddon are said to lie open before the Lord. The more fully developed monotheism represents the Land of the Shades as not without His reach (cf. Amos ix. 2 ; Job xxvi. 6). But there is as yet no moralizing of the state of the dead. The doctrine of a fuller future life worthy of the name of immortality belongs to a later time.

[1] In xiv. 13 'is' should probably be 'may be.' Toy in loc.

[2] Cheyne, *Job and Solomon*, p. 122 ; Toy, in loc. ; *Enc. Biblica*, p. 3915 ; Gore, *Commentary*, p. 381; and Oesterley, *Commentary*, lxiv. f.

(7) National Elements Lacking

There are no references to the law of the Sabbath, to the observance of the Passover and other feasts, to the priests and the temple; and even the prophets are referred to only once. Sacrifice, apart from the instances where it is depreciated in comparison with righteousness, is only mentioned casually, as an ordinary custom (vii. 14, xvii. 1). In iii. 9 may be a reference to tithes, but this is uncertain. The idea of Messianic deliverance is absent; nor do the Sages find any place for angels and demons.

Toy (*Commentary*, pp. xv. f.) well states his finding that the Sages speak in their own name, giving as their authority no book, and not explicitly claiming inspiration. Neither Moses nor the prophets are named. In vi. 32–5 there is a deviation from the old law which laid down death for both parties in a case of adultery. There are quotations from Ps. xviii. 31 and Deut. iv. 2, xiii. 1 in xxx. 5 f. (the Agur section), but the books are not named. There is complete silence as to a collection[1] of Sacred Writings, though the Book of Wisdom is in similar case when following the Pentateuch narrative. The Sages seem to have known much of our Old Testament, but treat it less as authoritative Scripture than as literature. This last statement must be rather modified in view of xxx. 5 f.

(*c*) Criticisms of the Religion and Ethics of Proverbs

(1) When compared with the religion of prophet and psalmist, that of the Wise Men does seem lacking in depth and spirituality of insight as well as in fervid enthusiasm. At first sight we seem to move upon a lower plane, in which there are few signs of a glowing love for God. The devotional elements of prayer and praise are wanting, as also the abasing consciousness of

[1] But cf. Oesterley, op. cit., p. 271.

sin and its expression in words of repentance. There is nothing of that sense of the immediacy of the divine presence and fellowship with God so characteristic of the psalms and prophetic writings. It would be false to say that the Sages had no joy in the service of the Almighty, but there is little indication of it in the book. While the love of God is mentioned (iii. 12, xv. 9 ; cf. viii. 17), it does not embrace both good and evil, as in the Christian revelation. 'I also will laugh in [the day of] your calamity ; I will mock when your fear cometh' (i. 26), sounds to us very unpleasant. In xvi. 6 and xxviii. 13 alone are there suggestions of forgiving grace.[1]

On the other hand, as already emphasized, while the chief good is wisdom, the starting-point, the essential element in it is the fear of the Lord (i. 7, ix. 10, xv. 33). Wisdom may be thoroughly intellectual, but religion is the first principle in it. The ethic is sure based on a religious foundation. Again and again the warnings against wrongdoing and the encouragements to right-doing are pointed by reference to the pleasure and displeasure of God (xi. 1, xii. 2, 22, xiv. 31, xvi. 7, xix. 17, xx. 10, 23, xxii. 12, xxii. 22 f., and xxiii. 10 f. [additions to Amen-em-ope] ; xxiv. 17 f., xxv. 22, &c.) Let the student go back over the preceding exposition of the ideas of the book for clear proofs of the reality, and even the intensity, of the religious life of the Sages. The writer of chapter viii., for example, must have had a mind saturated with the inspiration of direct fellowship with God.

Whether or no the prophetic vision is referred to in xxix. 18, the Sages were certainly so keenly alive to the great prophetic principles as to give themselves to the work of applying them to the routine of everyday duty. Their ideal was that of each day's duties worked

[1] 'The Sages, in fact, set forth a natural law in the moral world, which is no more capable of pity than physical law ; the rule is : be wise or perish—it is the rule of the ethical philosopher, not of the patriot or the preacher. In this respect, as in others, we are struck by the modernness of Proverbs' (*Enc. Biblica*, p. 3914).

out in harmony with a divine plan. They linked, in the closest possible way, religion and daily conduct. The wisdom by which duties were defined was identified with the will of the Lord. The precepts by which man is to live are bound up with the fear of God and an ethical relation to Him, and were, indeed, enjoined by Him as imperative in a rightly ordered plan of life.

Our book provides a reminder—as much needed now as when written—that true religion is far more than pietistic meditation and sanctuary worship, it being concerned with all the relations of our daily life. Every interest of every day is within the sphere of it. 'Proverbs' witnesses to the falsity of any conception which erects barriers between the sacred and the secular. The Wise Men applied religion to the whole range of human affairs at home or outside it. They were men of sound common sense, knowing that great principles must be embodied in common rules in order to be conserved.

(2) The ethical teaching[1] has also been unfavourably regarded. The chief points in the criticisms are such as these: Looked at from the higher New Testament standpoint, the aphorisms are shallow and commonplace, lacking in high moral aspiration. Idealism is wanting. A sordid, prudential temper, very unsuitable for the young Christian, is revealed; for what is exalted is an intelligent selfishness and an undue sense of the value of the good things of this world. The tuition of the Wise Men is, after all, but a course of instruction on how to make the most and best of a material, earthly life—how to follow enlightened self-interest. The appeals made to pursue wisdom are frankly and unsentimentally utilitarian and eudaemonistic. The motive urged is not that of the glory and love of God, or the benefit of society in general, but the welfare of the individual concerned; and the warnings against sin are grounded on the

[1] See, on the subject of this section, Toy's *Commentary*, pp. xiii.–xiv., 54; and *Enc. Biblica*, pp. 3913 f., 5331, &c.

ensuing disgrace, danger, and ruin rather than on the fear of losing the favour of God and the possession of a guilty conscience. Goodness is not expounded as an independent ideal, a desirable object of effort for its own sake ; it is to be sought for the personal material good which is its earthly reward. Further, as Toy looks at the matter, the views of the Sages were also ethically defective in their sharp division of men into good and bad (cf. p. 86). They neglected the varying shades in human character, and, in taking no account of man's inward conflicts and experiences, failed in real help and the sympathetic understanding of those struggling—it may be against great odds—to do the right. Such important qualities as courage,[1] fortitude (but see iii. 11, LXX), moderation in thought, self-sacrifice, intellectual truthfulness, and love of beauty, are not mentioned. Nor is the highest well-being of society as a whole recognized as a goal of effort. There is 'no recognition of society as an ethical cosmos, no attempt to define the relation between society and the individual or to harmonize egoism and altruism in the unity of the cosmos.' No reference can be found to the thought of the solidarity of society and of 'a sympathetic community and co-operation of men as the instrument for the development of the moral life.' Neither is there mention of international duties nor any explicit reference to conscience as a moral guide.

On the other hand, as Toy himself admits, we are dealing with an Old Testament book, not a modern treatise written under Christian influences. Some of these very charges can be made against other Old Testament writings. Silence about certain virtues cherished by us to-day does not necessarily mean that they did not exist, but only that they were regarded as of less importance than others for the practical life. At that time, too, there existed nowhere a science of international ethics. Moreover, speculative inquiries into aesthetics or ethics did not appeal to the Jews.

[1] But xviii. 14 seems to have been missed. Cf. xxviii. 1.

Such a practical people could hardly have been expected at that period to have defined and psychologically analysed conscience and the inner life. And yet, as we have seen, the function of conscience was strikingly recognized in viii. 9. To the Hebrew mind the exposition of ethical theory, and abstract discussions, and stress upon the consciousness of duty as a motive, were not essentials, as was the setting forth of such practical motives as seemed calculated to keep men in the way of righteousness. These were the hope of reward and fear of punishment. The Sages were practical teachers, probably fully aware of contemporary ethical thought, but not prepared to turn aside from the immediately useful to that which was more theoretical and remote. It is also not strictly true that the recognition of the value of virtue for its own sake is absent. The Wisdom that is of far more value than gold, silver, or rubies is of essential worth (iii. 13 ff., viii. 10 f., 19, xvi. 16), and, indeed, when in ii. 10 it is said that ' Wisdom shall enter into thy heart,' what is this but ' the ethical union of man with God conceived of as the moral ideal ' ?

Again, not a little can be said in favour of the frank appeal to rewards and punishments. (1) It must be realized that to the mass of people then (as also to-day) the most powerful motive is that of good or ill for themselves or their loved ones. We all wish ourselves well, and our conduct is influenced in no slight degree by prudential considerations. In fact, to some classes of wrongdoers the only motive that does appeal is the avoidance of trouble. And our book is only stating a fact when it insists that men cannot escape the consequences of their actions. Even Christianity may be termed eudaemonistic, and some preaching may be extremely such. We appeal to rewards and retribution as motives and incentives for right conduct. Our Lord Himself frequently referred to both rewards and penalties. Think of the Beatitudes of the Sermon on the Mount. Of course, the reward offered is salvation

here and hereafter—that is, eternal—and is of infinitely richer and more spiritual content than the earthly and more materialistic recompense of the Old Testament book. Besides, it gives fuller scope to the universalistic spirit in that the duty is fully recognized to seek the welfare of the whole and not merely that of one's own self. But, while the New Testament sanctions are sublime, they are sanctions. (2) In our book there is (probably) no revelation of a future life in which the wrongs of this may be redressed. Hence only earthly recompense could be thought of. And, if one lacking such a belief has faith in God and His universe as morally governed, one must believe in a connexion in this life between conduct and the experience of good or evil. After all, could righteousness be permanently maintained, if it were found, after a full investigation of all the facts, that the Ruler of the universe ultimately made no difference in His dealings with the good and the bad? It would hardly be possible for even the most spiritually minded saint to hold on to God if he were not sure that some time and somewhere the Object of His devotion would bestow some blessing not vouchsafed to the wicked. To our Sages the only place and time possible were here and now.

(3) Moreover, the frank appeal to the good or evil consequences of certain lines of conduct is certainly much more persuasive and compelling than any discussion of the abstract principles of reward or retribution. The aphorisms were not compiled for the use of philosophers, but for ordinary people. Montefiore (*Hibbert Lectures*, 1892, p. 488) regards the prudential element in our book and Ben Sira as due to the general gnomic nature of these collections. 'When righteousness becomes a phase of wisdom and vice a phase of folly, it is natural to prove the excellence of the one and the vileness of the other by pointing to their practical issues.' (4) Nor should it be forgotten that Proverbs is not a modern ethical treatise, but a book of an age in which revelation was yet preparatory

and imperfect. It was a period of ethical development which, even more than to-day, could be appealed to by a message in which emphasis was laid upon sanctions—remunerative and punitive—felt to be immediately constraining in their operation. And, even with us, is it possible to teach effectively the folly of sin and the wisdom of goodness without reference to consequences? Did not the great prophets appeal to prosperity (in their case national) as the reward of righteousness? (5) The morality has been called 'prudential.' But may not prudence help to produce a much higher ideal than itself? The consequences of right and wrong action may be presented, first of all, as prudential motives in crutchlike fashion, that habits may be formed which later give the capacity for higher things and more disinterested service for God.

(*d*) The Value of the Book of Proverbs

In addition to some points mentioned in the last section (*c*), a few further remarks on the essential worth of the book must be made. The terse, gnomic character of the aphorisms may tend to obscure their true value. The same thoughts would have gained far more appreciation clothed in the passionate beauty of the higher poetry; for this stirs the spirit as our aphorisms do not. As W. T. Davison[1] also comments, the lyrical or epic poet expands into an elaborate stanza what the gnomic poet condenses into a line. Thus, while the condensed form is more easily remembered, its beauty is harder to realize and rightly appreciate. Moreover, in our book we have not only condensed expressions, but a great number of them crowded together in a small space. Much of the genuine beauty and rich significance is lost because we have in the same section so many separate proverbs, which, being read too fast, fail to make their due impression upon

[1] *The Wisdom Literature of the Old Testament*, p. 125.

our minds. Unless we spend some little time with each saying, lifting it out for examination, and expanding it to its full meaning, we shall lose much of its significance, and fail in proper appreciation. Not only so, but an aphorism which ordinarily might seem tame and commonplace may become extraordinarily vivid and pregnant with beauty when some experience of the reader finds its fitting expression in it. Let one pass long days or months in expectant yearning for some great good, so long as to be hoping almost against hope, and such a verse as xiii. 12 will shine in the perfect felicity of both thought and word: 'Hope deferred makes the heart sick, but desire fulfilled is a tree of life.'

It is indisputable that in some of the sayings the teaching approaches that of the standard of our Lord. W. R. Harper finds the germs of seven of the Beatitudes and half the doctrine of the Sermon on the Mount in the book. This is probably an exaggeration, but, at any rate, it is true that the finest of its thoughts have been absorbed into the New Testament. The utilitarianism is often not so unrefined as some would suppose. The writers, we have already noticed, were not concerned with the ceremonial duties of the cultus, but they were very much so with righteousness and the heartfelt fear of God.[1] The tone is essentially and intensely ethical. A righteousness of a very high standard—far higher than some think—is the first interest, and it is grounded in religion.

The very impression of commonplaceness and triviality made on many readers may be deceptive. Professor R. G. Moulton is worth quoting: 'The reader of Proverbs must be on his guard against a first impression of commonplaceness. Proverbs have a prerogative to be commonplace; their mission is to voice the most widely diffused experience. And there is no literary function higher than that of giving point to what is ordinary, and rescuing a truth from the

[1] Cf. Hastings' *D. B.* v. 729*b*.

obscurity of obviousness.' Even if some of the aphorisms do deal with little things, is it not true that little faults do cause endless mischief and spoil a life which otherwise might be great? In any good system of living the lesser ethical rules must have an important place. While there are parts of Holy Writ of more ethical and religious value than Proverbs, that book's own value is very high. Should we depreciate other organs in the functioning of the body because we give greater honour to the head?

Besides, it is not possible to be always on the mountain-tops of exalted and ecstatic religious feeling with prophets and psalmists. After all, life must be lived mainly on the drab plains of everyday duty. We are taught in no uncertain manner that a true religious life cannot be divorced from interest in commonplace, average duties. We are reminded of Paul's emphasis on the chief work and normal action of the Spirit of God as less that of the production of supernormal phenomena and experiences than of the ordinary, everyday qualities and graces of the Christian character. Further, in the wisdom taught, a large place is given to the cultivation of the intellectual powers. A well-furnished mind is regarded as a constituent part of virtue. Heart and mind are not divorced. It is taught that, from the standpoint of the highest religious interests, it is imperative to develop our gifts of mind. Educated common sense is essential in a well-balanced religious life. How ignorance is scourged and wisdom praised! Intellectual talents, trained minds, imply the presence and activity of the divine Wisdom. Mental penetration and grip of the meaning of the affairs of life is of God.

G. A. Smith[1] remarks on the frequency of proverbs of rebuke, the reiteration that in education and morality mere abstract teaching is not enough, but that severe criticism and humbling censure are necessary. Criticism may often be cruel and irrelevant, but, again, it may

[1] *Modern Criticism and the Preaching of the Old Testament*, pp. 304 ff.

be exactly the stimulant needed. Our own age is impatient of personal reproof. We prefer the fellowship of those who condone or gloze our faults instead of those who faithfully and honestly blame our lack of correspondence with the noblest ideals. The loyal acceptance of just criticism as a sign of good moral health is one of the lessons of our book for us.

Our environment to-day is very different, but the sayings of these Wise Men touch our lives at many points. They treat of branches of practical ethics which over two millennia of further contact with men and things have shown to be still of the utmost importance for happy and successful living. Even the fuller and finer revelation in the New Testament has not made them obsolete, but only filled them with a richer content. Begin life, is the message of these teachers, with divine Wisdom. Grip her principles from the start. Learn her lessons, master their significance, and then face experience with them.[1] The early Christian Fathers, who called the book 'The Instructive Wisdom' and 'The All-Virtuous Wisdom,' did not belie their New Testament training. It may provide a witness to a revelation which is but imperfect and preparatory when compared with the teaching of the Son of God Himself; nevertheless, it is a most noble guide in the art of right living.

Gnomic literature was, of course, not confined to the Hebrew people. The making of aphorisms is universal, and especially popular among Eastern peoples. But the proverbs of the Old Testament surpass those of all other ancient collections. Fortunately, we are able to compare our book with such maxims as those of the Egyptians Ke'gemni, Ptah-Hotep, Ani, Amen-em-ope, Amen-em-hat, the Greeks Hesiod, Theognis, the Seven Sages, Menander, and others of the same races, as also those from Babylon, China, and India. One cannot read these without

[1] See G. A. Smith, op. cit., pp. 308 ff., and Elmslie's *Studies in Life from Jewish Proverbs*, for fine appreciations of the book.

again and again being profoundly impressed with the rich depth and fine tone of some of the proverbs.[1] But none, not even those of Amen-em-ope, maintain the general ethical and religious level of the Hebrew work. It stands above all others in its emphasis upon the essential elements of true righteousness, a righteousness firmly grounded in the fear of one God, who is not only omnipotent, but unswervingly just. Even when (see p. 42 f.) foreign material is used, as in the case of the Wisdom of Amen-em-ope, there is both a rejection and an enrichment in the process of transference eloquent of the incomparably deeper religious spirit.

[1] e.g. see S. Langdon's *Babylonian Wisdom*, p. 90 ; *The Babylonian Book of Proverbs*, § G : ' Unto him that doeth thee evil thou shalt return good.' Also : ' What you do not like if done to yourself, do not do to others ' (Confucius) ; ' Do not do to others that at which you would be angry if you suffered it from others ' (Isocrates). ' Say not : " Find me a redeemer : now I shall be able to avenge me on mine enemy " ' (Amen-em-ope) ; ' Recompense injury with kindness ' (Lao-Tze).

Chapter IV

THE BOOK OF JOB

A. INTRODUCTION

I. Outline of Contents

The main divisions are as follows :

(1) Prologue. Job's piety, prosperity, and subsequent misfortunes (chapters i.–ii.).

(2) Job's bitter soliloquy (chapter iii.).

(3) Dialogues between Job and the three friends, Eliphaz, Bildad, and Zophar. First cycle (chapters iv.–xiv.) ; second cycle (chapters xv.–xxi.) ; third cycle (chapters xxii.–xxvii.).

(4) Poem on Wisdom (chapter xxviii.).

(5) Job's closing soliloquy (chapters xxix.–xxxi.).

(6) The speeches of Elihu, who intervenes to set both parties right (chapters xxxii.–xxxvii.).

(7) The speeches of Yahweh in reply to Job, and the patriarch's submission (xxxviii. 1–xlii. 6).

(8) Epilogue. The divine censure of the three friends, and Job's restoration to prosperity (xlii. 7–17).

The prologue, epilogue, the short introduction regarding Elihu (xxxii. 1–5), and the introductory sentences to the various speeches, are in prose ; the rest is poetry.

The book is one of the world's great masterpieces. Indeed, some well qualified to judge—Tennyson, Froude, Carlyle—regard it as the supreme product of poetic genius ; not only the finest flower of Hebrew

literature, but the most splendid achievement of the literary art wherever practised. It deals with the deepest problems of the human spirit, the ultimate questions of to-day and for ever. It is a book of our age as well as its own. The fearless attitude to problems which are, after all, our own, strongly attracts us. 'One feels, indeed, as if it were not Hebrew; such a noble universality, different from noble patriotism or sectarianism, reigns in it. A noble book; all men's book! . . . There is nothing written, I think, in the Bible or out of it, of equal literary merit' (Carlyle, *The Hero as Prophet*).

II. Place in Canon

The order in which our book is placed differs in the various ancient versions, MSS., and lists. Generally it has been classed with the poetical books, though sometimes with the histories. In the printed Hebrew Bibles it comes third in the third part of the Canon, the Hagiographa (= the Kethubim = the Writings). In our English versions, following the arrangement which eventually prevailed in copies of the Latin Vulgate, it stands between Esther and the Psalms, and may be regarded as either the last of the historical or the first of the poetical books. It differs from other Wisdom reflection books in using dialogue, the combination of prose and poetry, and in dealing at length with a single theme.[1]

III. History or Invention?

In former times the book was regarded as historical fact. This view is now universally set aside by serious scholars. Even so far back as the third century A.D., Resh Lakish, or an unnamed contemporary of his, said that 'Job did not exist and was not created, but he is a parable.' Most students call attention to the supernatural machinery and heavenly assemblies of

[1] Driver and Gray, *Critical and Exegetical Commentary*, p. xxii.

the prologue, the symbolic use of the numbers three, five, and seven (i. 2, 3, 4, 17, ii. 11, xlii. 8, 13), the exact doubling of possessions in the epilogue (xlii. 10, 12), the humorous element in the Satan dialogues, the dramatic character of the repeated 'I only am escaped alone to tell thee' (i. 15, 16, 17, 19), and the highly developed and exquisitely phrased poetic diction. These marks suggest careful construction and studied artistic reflection rather than words flung out in the heat of debate.

Some treat the book as pure invention, a poetic fiction. This was the view of Lakish, his fellow Jew Maimonides, and the more modern Merx, Reuss, and Hengstenberg. Most, however, presume an historical basis. A popular traditional story has been freely and poetically treated. It would seem, from Ezek. xiv. 14, 20, that Job had actually lived. Experts differ in their estimates of the amount of historical fact so idealized, and, further, as to whether this was embodied in literature (a sort of folks-book) or only in oral tradition. Possibly there was handed down the names of the hero and his friends, his wealth, his piety, his dreadful afflictions and patience under them, and his final healing. The home of Job is set outside Israel. This may have been part of the author's purpose to rise above all merely national views to a broader humanism in the exposition of his problem. On the other hand, the tradition may have included Job's home in Uz. Uz lay to the east of Palestine, but whether in Syria in the north-east, or in the south-east within or near Edom, is still a debated point. The probabilities seem to be on the side of the latter opinion.

The name 'Job' (אִיּוֹב; LXX, Ἰώβ), or, more properly, Iyyob, is not found elsewhere in Hebrew literature; for the Job of Gen. xlvi. 13 is יוֹב. A postscript to the Septuagint and the apocryphal Testament of Job identifies the patriarch with Jobab, King of Edom, mentioned in Gen. xxxvi. 33.

Attempts have been made to explain the name significantly. Interpreted by the Hebrew, it is said to mean 'the one assailed' (by God, Satan, friends, or calamity), or 'the attacker' (of the ancient doctrine of retribution). Explained by Arabic, it is said to mean 'the penitent' or 'pious' one ever turning to God. Probably the name is of foreign origin, and taken over with the other traditional elements, though it is not impossible that during the process of transference it may have been modified and made significant. Cheyne (*Enc. Biblica*, pp. 2464, 2469) traces the name to Ea-bani, a Babylonian hero-sufferer. While mentioned in Ezek. xiv. and Ecclus. xlix. 9, the only implication is that Job is thought of as an historical character; they do not necessarily imply the existence of our book or its contents. The Koran refers to the patriarch in terms of admiration for his patience.

IV. Does the Book Contain Foreign Material?

In *Greek Literature* a parallel has been pointed out in Plato's just man who is deemed unjust, scourged, tormented, fettered, having his eyes burnt out, and lastly, after suffering every kind of torture, impaled; this and other facts suggesting that the gods deal better with the wicked than the just. It has also been thought that while the author of Job may not or may have read the Socratic dialogues, their existence was well known to him, and their form imitated (N. Schmidt, O. Holtzmann). But, as Driver and Gray (p. xxiv.) argue, the differences between the quick responses and the closely knit analytical prose arguments of the Greek and the long, set poetical dialogues of the Hebrew book are too great to indicate dependence.

The *Prometheus Bound* of Aeschylus[1] is often compared with our book. Indeed, the same great problems are faced in both—the just visited by heaven with undeserved affliction. But no evidence is discoverable

[1] In the *Expository Times*, vol. xxxix., pp. 131 f., J. J. Slotki brings forward some striking parallels in thought and expression.

of contact, although our author may have known something of the story of the lonely figure on the crag defying Zeus and his friends defending the god.[1] Analogies to the patriarch's experiences or the solutions offered can be found also in Sophocles, Theognis, and others, but these are only other parallel but quite independent examples of the same questioning spirit.

An *Edomite* origin is possible. Job's home in Uz, those of the three friends, and some other elements in the tradition, as also the alleged pessimism, are held to indicate this. But, if so, the author has put upon it the peculiar mark of the Hebrew religious genius to reinterpret spiritually the materials received.

Comparisons have been made with the 'Maqamat' poetry of Hariri and Hamadhani, with its dialogue and combination of prose and poetry. But these *Arabic* works belong to the tenth and eleventh centuries of our era. And attempts (such as, e.g., that of Spanheim) to prove that our book is a Hebrew translation of an Arabic work have been rightly set aside.

India has been held to furnish parallels. Gautama the Buddha, like Job, was a soul in revolt. The ancient monarch Atshandira, like the patriarch, was an innocent victim whose piety endured the severest tests at the hands of Siva Rudra, the Indian Satan. *Egypt* also had its Book of Job in the second millennium B.C., when 'The Dialogue of a Misanthrope with his own Soul' was written. But all that is here proved is that the problem of suffering had arisen in many parts of the ancient world.

More is to be said of attempts to trace the origin to *Babylonian* literature. Cheyne (*Enc. Biblica*, pp. 2464, 2469) believes the source to be the story of Ea-Bani, a hero-sufferer supernaturally healed. But the parallels are unimportant. In the *Expository Times*, vol. xxxi., pp. 440 ff., Professor G. B. Gray has drawn attention to a text[2] published by Ebeling in 1918: 'A Dialogue

[1] Schmidt, *The Messages of the Poets*, p. 88.
[2] Cf. S. Langdon, *Babylonian Wisdom*.

between a Master and his Slave.' An English translation of six verses is given, and it is clear that dialogue is used for the exposition and discussion of the problems of life. But, as Gray says, the tone, temper, contents, and general treatment of theme in the two books are altogether different. The discovery only shows that the critical outlook on life was native in Babylonia as elsewhere.

What is known as the 'Babylonian Job' deserves fuller notice.[1] This is the story of Tabi-utul-Bel (or Shubshi-Meshre-Nergal), possibly King of Nippur. This poem has come from the archives of Ashurbanipal (668–626 B.C.). But that it is of a much earlier age is proved by the existence in that time of a philological commentary on it, as well as a much older duplicate. The king, wealthy, god-fearing, is stricken with sore disease, railed at by his friends, but in the end restored to the favour of his god Marduk. The tablets record his plaintive descriptions of the miseries suffered. He had tried to live a pious life; never had he wittingly neglected the gods: 'Prayer was my rule, sacrifice my order; the day on which the gods were worshipped was the day of my heart.' Though conscious of no sin to justify their unjust and cruel attitude, his deities had apparently ceased to be gracious, heeded not his prayer, and treated him as wicked. Bewildered in face of the mystery of the ways of deity, now exhibiting so unrelenting a spirit towards him, he pours out his soul in bitter anguish. Who knows how to act so as to be certain to please the gods?

The resemblances in thought and some expressions to our Job are enough to Langdon and Kent, and almost enough to Wardle, to demonstrate some connexion between the two writings. But there are pronounced differences. The religious atmosphere of

[1] See Jeremias, *The Old Testament in the Light of the Ancient East*, vol. i., p. 228 ff.; Wardle, *Israel and Babylon*, pp. 87 ff.; Driver and Gray, op. cit., p. xxxi.; *Expository Times*, vol. xxxi., p. 442, vol. xxxiv., p. 561; Langdon, *Babylonian Wisdom*; Barton, *Archaeology and the Bible*, pp. 453 ff.; Kent and Burrows, *Proverbs and Didactic Poems*, pp. 35 ff.

our book is specifically Hebrew, with its pure monotheism in contrast with polytheism. The king's complaint is very much more mild and gentle than that of the patriarch. Unlike in Job, where the righteousness of the man is admitted by Yahweh, and maintained by Job himself, he admits possible sins sufficient to explain his pains, and would like to know what they were. Job's conception of sin is more ethical ; the faults unintentionally committed by the king seem to have been omissions or errors of ritual duty. Pain is never thought of as a discipline. Job obtains relief through a vision of God, Tabi-utul-Bel through magic. As Gray observes, the names of the persons, the geography, and the rank of the sufferer are different. The Babylonian work is a monologue, not a dialogue, nor a combination of prose-narrative and poetry. It becomes sure that the Hebrew work is not based upon the Babylonian, though it is not impossible its author may have known the older story. Ball believes that the poem of Tabi-utul-Bel was written to attract sufferers to the temple of Marduk ; and, if so, its spirit is totally dissimilar to our book.

V. The Literary Form and its Artistic Perfection

As to form, it is a didactic poem. John Milton named it epic poetry, and there are epic elements in prologue and epilogue. Others, in view of the dialogues, have thought it a drama, or even a tragic-drama. Lyric elements have been found. But, while elements of dramatic, epic, and lyric poetry are there, none of these names suitably characterize the work. To force it into any particular mould is to cramp it, while to call it an epic-dramatic-lyrical poem is simply to pronounce the problem insoluble. Job is unique, a class by itself, *sui generis*.

With respect to its metrical forms, the student must consult Driver-Gray, pp. lxxvii. f., or Hastings's *D. B.*, ii. 663. It is enough here to notice that the usual poetical rhythm is the balanced parallelistic couplet

containing three beats in each line. But tristichs are found, and two couplets are sometimes worked into a quatrain.

All experts recognize the work as that of a marvellous poetic genius, while many well qualified to judge think it the world's greatest single poem. It is a magnificent conception, beautifully bodied. There is noble diction, sustained and constructive imagination. The wealth, variety, multiplicity, and aptness of metaphor is a constant source of wonder. Graphic powers of character delineation, dramatic skill, impressiveness in descriptions of external nature, freshness and vitality of poetic perception and sensitiveness, are in evidence throughout. Not wanting are pungent irony and even a touch of humour. The work is built up on sublime lines. While at times the debate reveals emotions at the white heat of intense and pained feeling, the movement of the poem develops unspoilt by a single jarring note or a psychological falsity.[1]

Dealing with a problem which is human rather than characteristically Hebrew, mark the skill in which an extra-Israelitish colour is given. The scene does not lie in the Holy Land. Only once, and that in a doubtful verse (xii. 9), does the personal and distinctively Hebrew name for God, Yahweh, appear in the poetical parts. Job himself only uses it once in the prologue (i. 21). Both Job and his friends generally (but five rather doubtful exceptions) use the older and more general divine names El, Eloah, Shaddai, though the author himself uses the name Yahweh in the prologue, epilogue, and the narrative links in the speeches of Yahweh.

VI. Text and Versions[2]

In recent years the Hebrew text has been much

[1] For a less complimentary criticism see A. Bertholet, *History of Hebrew Civilization*, p. 331.

[2] Driver-Gray, op. cit., pp. xlix. f., lxxi. f.; *Enc. Biblica*, pp. 2490, 5027; *D. B.* ii. 664, Swete's *Introduction to the Old Testament in Greek*, for details.

challenged, and, in the light of critical knowledge, needs emendation in many places. In its original form, which seems to have been recovered from a Sahidic (Coptic) translation published by Ciasca in 1889, the Septuagint version, dated before 80 B.C., and possibly some years earlier, varies from the Massoretic text more than any other Old Testament book. It is shorter than the Hebrew by nearly 400 lines—that is, between one-fifth and one-sixth is absent from the Greek. Some scholars (Bickell, Hatch) have argued that the LXX is the more original form, but most think that the Hebrew text is the earlier and better. Driver-Gray remark that the passages absent from the LXX are similar in style and vocabulary to the rest, and, further, that the removal from the text of the passages absent from the LXX destroys in many cases the poetical parallelism. While sometimes the Greek version is of value, as a whole its free and periphrastic style is less helpful in the text-criticism of Job than in some other Old Testament books. The other versions (Peshitta, Syriac, Targumic, Latin) are of less importance.

Bickell, basing his arguments partly on the shorter LXX form and partly on his metrical theories (one of which is that the original work consisted only of quatrains), rejects not only the 400 lines missing from the Greek version, but a great many more besides. But, while favoured by the English scholar, Dr. Dillon, others have rightly set this view aside as improbable.

VII. Questions of Integrity

A. The Prologue and Epilogue (*chapters i.–ii., xlii 7–17*)

The view that these were written later than the dialogues is now given up, though at one time held by Simon, Studer, De Wette, and S. Lee. While most students think that our book is based upon some form of traditional *oral* story, many believe that the prologue and epilogue are derived from an ancient prose *book*.

The theory associated with the name of Duhm goes still further. Not only, it is said, are these sections from an earlier folks-book, but this book was of a very different character from the present one. Our author used its introduction and conclusion, but discarded its dialogues between Job and the three friends and a speech of Yahweh, substituting his own of an opposite character. This hypothesis has found favour with Sellin, N. Schmidt, Peake, Strahan, Franks, and others. In the discarded portions, it is thought, Job maintained throughout a patient and submissive attitude under all his trials ; the three friends gave him similar advice to that of his wife ; the patriarch was praised and the friends blamed by God ; and the misfortunes of the good were assumed to be only temporary exceptions to the general law that righteousness necessarily issued in prosperity.

The reasons for this opinion, together with arguments to the contrary, are briefly : (1) The prologue and epilogue are in prose ; the rest is poetry. But narrative Hebrew is prose ; and even within the poetic sections the narrative introductions to the various speakers are the same (cf. iii. 1, iv. 1, xxxii. 1–6, xxxviii. 1, xl. 1, 3, 6). (2) Different names for God are used in the poem and the prose sections (see end of V.). But this difference in usage with respect to the name Yahweh is deliberate, and is due to the author's determination to give an extra-Israelitish colouring to utterances placed in the mouth of non-Israelites. Driver-Gray (pp. xxxv. ff.), after a careful examination of the facts, further conclude that part of the difference in usage with respect to some other divine names is due to the distinction between prose and poetry ; and, further, not only does the differing employment of the divine names not demand different writers, but certain similarities of style and vocabulary favour—as far as prologue is concerned—identity of authorship. (3) In the prose sections, Job is meek and patient in resignation to the divine will (i. 20–2, ii. 9 f.),

and is commended for speaking rightly about God (xlii. 7) ; but in the poem he is far from submissive (*passim* ; cf. Chapter V., Section 4*b*), and is rebuked by God for not speaking rightly (xxxviii. 1 f., xl. 1 f.). But, as will be seen when the teaching of the epilogue is considered, the condemnation and approval of the patriarch do not refer to one and the same matter. He spoke both wrongly and rightly. Further, it is psychologically understandable that one who at the outset of his calamities felt resigned might later break down and utter the passionate cries of resentment against God attributed to Job. Moreover, as Peake himself admits (*Com.*, p. 344), the poet did not find the words of the epilogue so contradictory as to scruple to retain them, and he even put a prediction of them into Job's mouth (xiii. 7–11). (4) In the poem the three friends are sincere men, reverencing God, maintaining His justice, and honestly if misguidedly seeking to assist His cause. They sought to bring Job to that very attitude of submission to which later he came. Yet in the epilogue they are blamed (xlii. 7) as impious, and needed Job to sacrifice and intercede for them. But again, when the section on the teaching of the epilogue is read, it will be seen that such condemnation was fitting. In reality they had spoken falsely about God and distorted the truth concerning Him. (5) In the prose sections the sorrows of Job are but temporary, and hence only seeming exceptions to the accepted belief of the inseparable connexion of piety and prosperity ; in the poem this belief is completely discarded. On this also see section on the teaching of epilogue. (6) The writer of the prologue had an explanation for misfortune, and in particular that of Job ; the writer of the poem, as the Yahweh-speeches prove, did not have one ; in fact, he regarded the question as finally insoluble by human intelligence. But may not a writer, wrestling with a great problem, present different solutions of it which he or others had regarded as of weight before he finally gave his considered judgement ?

(7) In the prologue it is the integrity of Job that is in dispute ; in the poem it is rather the righteousness of God, who is at the bar instead of the patriarch. But is it not perfectly intelligible that a thinker such as the author of our book would look beyond the particular sufferer to the wider issues? After all, the goodness of God was the main question. (8) In the prose, Job is a shepherd-prince ; in the poem, a city ruler. But the former rôle is part of the literary colouring. The author is really speaking to a later age, and this naturally betrays itself in the poem. (9) The sufferings of Job in xvi. 10 ff. (from human adversaries) are different from those of the prologue. But xvi. 10 ff. is of uncertain interpretation, and verses 10–11 are often regarded as interpolations. Further, in the prose, Job loses his children (i. 18 f.) ; in xix. 17 they seem to be alive. But in viii. 4 and xxix. 5 they are also assumed to be dead, and the reference in xix. 17 may be to uterine brothers, or even grandchildren, or children of concubines, or clansmen. (10) In the prose narratives, sacrifice seems essential ; in the poem it is not mentioned. In the former, again, the Deuteronomic law of the single Temple sanctuary is unknown, while the Sabeans and Chaldeans are still wandering Bedouins. These traits point to a much earlier age. But the sacrifices are the patriarchal burnt-offerings, and thus part of the literary art of the author, while priests are mentioned in xii. 19. (11) In the prologue, Satan is the cause of Job's trials ; elsewhere he is never mentioned, and Job's sufferings are held to be due to God. It is further argued by Marshall[1] that while, in the prologue, Satan is a malicious spirit antagonistic to God, and so suggestive of an incipient dualism, in the poem God is the one Cause in the world. But it is well replied that the Satan of Job is not independent, but only God's subordinate, His servant, acting only with His permission, and, indeed, the agent of His sifting providence.

[1] *Job and his Comforters*, pp. 92 f.

Sellin thinks that the Satan-passages (i. 6–12, ii. 1–7*a*) may be later insertions to the original folks-book ; but Driver-Gray (p. xxxvii.) reject this as destroying on inadequate grounds the dramatic effectiveness of the prologue.

Some other arguments in favour of Duhm's theory are well summarized in Peake's *Commentary*, p. 347 : (12) In the prologue, the misfortunes of the righteous are regarded as exceptional ; in the poetical sections, Job holds them to be common everywhere. (13) In the prose, religion is reverence, especially dread of offending God in speech. In the poem, Eliphaz represents this standpoint. But in Job himself there is represented man's moral independence of God, who is regarded, although He manifests His infinite superiority to man, as the comrade and friend of the pious. And when the prose was written, the supernatural world seemed near ; in the poem, God can be found only in nature. (14) In the prose, euphemisms are found for offensive expressions (i. 5, xlii. 8) ; in the poem, the language is strong and free. But the last three arguments have no great weight ; for the author is a thinker representing various moods and points of view, not merely his own final conclusion ; and, further, throwing his thoughts into the forms of an earlier age, though not so perfectly as to fail to reveal sure traces of the actual time in which he lived.

The cumulative effect of the arguments summarized is not without weight. Yet every one can be effectively countered. Sure it is that the whole work demands our prologue. Otherwise the dialogues have no meaning ; they hang in the air. The heavenly scenes supply the very foundations of the main discussions. As Driver-Gray (p. xxxvii.) well put the matter, whether the author of our book used earlier oral material which he himself worked up in the prologue, or used part of a book already existing, the book as it left his hands consisted of prologue, dialogue, and

epilogue. Even if Duhm's theory is the correct one, our writer did not find this earlier book out of harmony with his plan and purposes, for he made it an integral part of his own work. A special objection to the epilogue, i.e. that it seems to reinstate the very conception challenged in the poem—that prosperity must necessarily follow piety—will be dealt with when discussing the teaching of this section. Nevertheless, both Driver-Gray (p. 373) and Cheyne (*Enc. Biblica*, p. 2467) regard the style of the epilogue as less compressed and concentrated, and consequently inferior in artistry to the prologue.

B. The Speeches of Elihu (*chapters xxxii.–xxxvii.*)[1]

The great majority of modern scholars regard these speeches as not by the author of the rest of the book. The reasons generally given can be summarized as follows :

(1) Elihu is not mentioned elsewhere in the book. He is not noticed by the three friends, nor does Job reply to him, and, even though he takes an attitude similar to the three who are blamed by God, the divine speeches ignore him. (2) These chapters seriously interrupt the continuity of the poem. They come as a surprise, and can be deleted without hurt to the argument. Yahweh's words in xxxviii. 1 ff. indicate that Job is still speaking, and connect most naturally with chapter xxxi. The author of the poem was a literary genius ; he is hardly likely himself to have inserted a section which spoils the artistic perfection. (3) While some scholars (Budde, Cornill, Sellin, Box, &c.) believe that Elihu made a great, and in fact the final, contribution to the solution of the problem discussed,'[2] on the contrary, most students cannot see that he adds anything substantially new to the

[1] Driver-Gray, pp. xl. ff. ; Peake, pp. 21 ff. ; Davidson, *Commentary*, pp. xl. ff.

[2] See Chapter V.

argument. His views are really those of the three friends. Eliphaz had taught the same doctrine of the disciplinary character of suffering. Moreover, in xxxii. 27–xxxvii. 21 he anticipates what Yahweh says in xxxviii. 4–38. Of course, as some admit, such an argument is two-edged ; for if Elihu contributes nothing new to the discussion, it could be inferred that no reason exists for its being inserted later. (4) The angelology, eschatology, and conceptions of God are more advanced[1] than in the rest of the poem, an indication of a later date. (5) Elihu's contribution to the discussion still leaves sin and suffering inseparable. But it is the conviction of the writer of the main poem that they are not inseparable, that suffering does not *necessarily* imply previous wickedness. True, Elihu specially emphasizes affliction as disciplinary rather than merely punitive, and due to the divine goodness (xxxiii. 14–30, xxxvi. 8–25), but Eliphaz (v. 8 ff., 17 ff.) had taught the same thing. It is rather curious that a great poet should (as the theory of identical authorship demands) lead on a fresh speaker to develop a thought which could have been better done by the first one. (6) The style is, on the whole, distinctly inferior to that of the rest. Driver thinks it ' prolix, laboured, and sometimes tautologous.' It is diffuse, tedious, strained, less spontaneous and brilliant. Even Budde now agrees, cutting out as corruptions or glosses some of the inferior portions. Further, while there are some features in common with other parts, there are notable differences in style and vocabulary (cf. Driver-Gray, pp. xli. ff.). The Aramaic colouring is certainly stronger. These differences have sometimes been explained as purposed. Elihu, it is thought, is introduced into the poem in order to ridicule him. He says nothing worth while, is a type of the conceited, bombastic, inexperienced young man who thinks he knows everything and has a mission to set everybody else right, and performs his work with an abundance

[1] See Chapter V.

of words. On the contrary, Elihu is not intended as a braggart. The tone is perfectly serious, and not a little is said which is worthy and true, and of theological value. The words are the natural expression of a certain type of contemporary Wisdom thought, very scrupulous in its piety. (7) The rest of the work seems to have been actually before the writer of the Elihu sections as he wrote. He quotes far more precisely from other sections than a great literary artist like the author of the rest of the book would have allowed himself to do had he been the writer. Note such passages as xxxiii. 10, xiii. 24; xxxiii. 11, xiii. 27; xxxiii. 15, iv. 13; xxxv. 8, xxii. 2; xxxiv. 3, xii. 11; xxxv. 5, xxii. 12; xxxvii. 8, xxxviii. 40; xxxiii. 8 f. and ix. 21, x. 7, xiii. 18, xvi. 17, xxiii. 7, 10–12, xxvii. 4–6, 31. See also xxxiv. 3–7, 8–11, 21–24, xxxv. 2–3, 5–8, xxxvi. 25.

The cumulative strength of these arguments is very impressive. Driver-Gray think the chapters absolutely superfluous. Whether that judgement is too strong or not, it seems clear that they are a later supplement. Those who defend the identity of authorship think that in xxxvii. 1 ff. the poet is preparing the way for the divine speeches by dramatically conceiving the thunderstorm as approaching. But, as Driver-Gray and Peake reply, if this is really the case, a great poet was very inartistic, since he mingles his description of the storm with other things (ice, snow) presumably not seen at the time of speaking. Sellin, Bruno Bauer, Kamphausen, think that the section is by the author of the rest, but added at a later time, when his style was rather different or reflection had led to some change of thinking. Box (*Short Introduction*, p. 134) suggests that the author had left this section in an incomplete form, and this accounts for the many obscurities and repetitions. Barton thinks that two independent criticisms—one of Job and another of the three—have originally been combined.

C. The Speeches of Yahweh (chapters xxxviii. 1–xli.).[1]

(1) Within these chapters the ostrich section (xxxix. 13–18) is sometimes rejected as an interpolation. The verses are absent from the LXX. Possibly, however, it is only misplaced (after 26 or 30). Driver-Gray reject 17 only. (2) Very many set aside the descriptions of Behemoth and Leviathan (xl. 15–xli. 34; Heb. 26). These sections are poetically inferior to the rest of the words of Yahweh. The style is prolix, tedious, laboured. The heavy, drawn-out accumulation of the minute bodily details of foreign monsters compares unfavourably with the terse, vivid, Palestinian animal descriptions elsewhere. The interrogative form, so frequent in the previous pictures, is less prominent, almost wanting. The section does not suit its present position, and is too long in proportion to the space given to the main subject of discourse. Driver-Gray think that xli. 1–11 (Heb. xl. 25–xli. 3), which are mainly interrogations, might possibly be from the author of chapters xxxviii. ff.; others add xl. 15–24. But Peake is unable to agree.

(3) Some scholars (e.g. N. Schmidt, Cheyne) think that the speeches as a whole were not part of the original work. The chief reasons given are: (*a*) In both prologue and epilogue, God approves and praises the patriarch; in xxxviii. 2 He blames him. The tone of the speeches is one of cruel mockery and stinging rebuke. (*b*) Job himself had previously confessed the might and unsearchable wisdom of Yahweh (ix. 4–10, xii. 12–25, xxvi. 5–12 ?). He had never challenged it. The rebuke was unnecessary, and strongly points to different writers. (*c*) Would the poet of the main section, had he been the writer of this, have altogether ignored Job's questions and pleas for the explanation of his pain? Note the demands for a face-to-face

[1] Driver-Gray, pp. xlviii., lviii. ff., 348 f., 351; Sellin, *Introd.*, pp. 215 f.; Peake, pp. 16 f., 28 f., 329 f.; *Journal of Biblical Literature*, xlvii., 1928, 117 ff. (Millar Burrows).

interview with God. All are unmentioned, as if they had never been. Would the original poet have so disregarded the natural questionings of an innocent and sorely perplexed soul?[1]

The style of the Yahweh section itself (except in the special verses already noted) does not lead to the inference of a different writer. The only arguments of strength are such as those outlined from the nature of the contents. It will be shown in Chapter V. (7) how necessary the words of Yahweh are to the whole work, which falls to pieces otherwise. Without them it is robbed of its chief significance. Sellin (pp. 215 f., 218), who also regards the speeches of God as contradicting the fundamental thought of the author in chapters iii.–xxxi., nevertheless thinks they are his, written at a different time, when his opinions had been revised.

For reasons given in their commentaries, Peake and Driver-Gray believe there was only one address of Yahweh. The former thinks the one speech consisted of chapters xxxviii., xxxix., xl. 2, 8–14, and Job's one reply to be in xl. 3–5, xlii. 2, 3, 5, 6 (except perhaps xlii. 3*a*). Thus xl. 1, 6–7, xlii. 1, 4, and perhaps 3*a* are later additions. If a *second* address, xl. 7–14, 'when Job has confessed his error, comes perilously near to nagging' (Peake). Driver-Gray also argue for one speech of Yahweh, xxxviii. 2–xxxix. 30, xl. 2 (except xxxix. 17), the one reply of Job being xl. 4–5, xlii. 2, 3*c*, *d*, 5, 6, and that the whole section xl. 6 to end of xli. is an interpolation. A. R. Gordon agrees with Peake. Millar Burrows considers that the case for a single speech and reply has not been proved.

D. Chapter xxiv.[2]

Every verse in this chapter, except 25, has been suspected (Merx, 9–24; Grill, 5–9, 14–21; Bickell,

[1] For a rebuttal of the idea of Hoonacker that the writer of the Elihu chapters cannot have known the speech of Yahweh, see Peake, pp. 29 f.

[2] Driver-Gray, pp. 205 f.; Peake, pp. 223 f.

5–8, 10–24; Siegfried, 13–24; Duhm, 1–4, 5–12 [and xxx. 2–8], xiii. 18*a*, 18*b*–24 [a cycle of four poems]; Peake, 9, 18–21, 24; Driver-Gray, 10*a*, 11*a*). One reason given for such large excisions as those of Merx, Bickell, and Duhm is that the poetical form is different from the rest in that it is in tristichs instead of the usual distichs. But Peake and Driver-Gray think this too drastic; for the poet may well have used the tristichal form at times, and, further, as the Oxford scholars point out, tristichs are really not so numerous here as supposed. Merx also reveals 9–24 as a substitute for a speech of Job too sweeping in its indictment to be preserved. On the whole, however, this chapter, with the exception of a few verses, does not inappropriately follow chapter xxiii. Peake, not agreeing that Job is, in 18–21, stating the opinions of the friends in order to combat them (so R.V.), thinks these verses, in asserting the punishment of the wicked, out of harmony with the thought of Job. Verses 9 and 24 are also set aside as glosses, the former because out of place in its present position, the latter because it contradicts Job's expressions elsewhere as to the lot of the wicked. Driver-Gray cut out only 10*a* and 11*a*, transpose 9 after 3, 14*c* after 15; and, further, suggest that Job in 18–21 may be citing opinions of his friends in order to reject them in 22 f., though much of 18–24 is corrupt and ambiguous. Hoffmann thinks that 13–25 belongs to Bildad, following xxv. 6, while Marshall gives 18–21, and Ley 18–20, to the same speaker.

E. Chapters xxv.–xxviii.[1]

These chapters raise many difficulties. The facts are briefly these: In the first and second cycles each of the three friends speaks, and Job replies to each. In the third round, Eliphaz speaks and Job responds. Then Bildad makes a very short speech (xxv. 2–6), in which the last three verses practically repeat Eliphaz

[1] Driver-Gray, pp. xxxviii.–xl., 215 seq.; Peake, pp. 230–53; Davidson, pp. xxxv. ff.

in xv. 14–16; and no speech at all is forthcoming from Zophar. Chapters xxvi.–xxviii. are set down as the words of Job, but some of the opinions expressed (e.g. xxvii. 7–10, 13–23, and xxviii.) completely contradict his utterances elsewhere. Further, xxvi. 5–14, though not inappropriate to Job, is very like Bildad in chapter xxv.

It is sometimes held that the shortness of Bildad's speech and the absence of one from Zophar was intentional, being part of the author's purpose to represent them as throwing up the case in utter defeat. Most modern scholars, however, either cut out the contradictory sections as interpolations, or believe that in some manner the text of chapters xxv.–xxvii. has been dislocated, and that therein are parts, or less probably the whole, of the final speeches of Bildad and Zophar, and Job's reply(ies) to one or both. The dislocation hypothesis is, naturally, the most popular and likely.

(*a*) Peake regards *Bildad's third speech* as originally of more than a few verses. He finds it in xxv. 2–3 and xxvi. 5–14, and Job's reply in xxvi. 2–4 and xxvii. 2–6, 11, 12. Chapter xxv. 4–6 is thought a gloss, being mere echoes of Eliphaz in xv. 14–16. Other schemes give to Bildad xxvi. 1–4 and xxv. 2–3, with something lost between xxvi. 4 and 5 if 2–4 and 5–14 are part of Job's speech (Driver-Gray); xxvi. 2–4, xxv. 2–6, xxvi. 5–14 (Duhm); xxv. 2–3, xxvi. 12, 13, 14*c*, xxv. 4–6 (Bickell); xxv. 1–6, xxiv. 18–20, xxvii. 13–23 (Ley); xxiv. 18–21 (Marshall). Peake and Strahan think that between xxvii. 11 and 12 words of Job have been suppressed as being too strong an indictment of God's actions.

(*b*) *Zophar's third speech* is usually found in chapter xxvii. Peake and Driver-Gray give him 7–10, 13–23; Bickell, 7–10, 14–20; 13–23 (Kennicott); 11–23 (Sellin); 7–23 (Strahan, Hoffmann). Marshall finds it in xxv. 2–6 and xxvi. 5–14, and Graetz in 7–23 and xxviii. There are serious reasons for regarding 7–10,

13–23 as not spoken by Job. If they were, the patriarch contradicts himself. They assert the evil fate which overtakes the wicked, the very thing the friends had always consistently maintained, and which Job had strenuously denied; for he had emphasized their success and lack of due retribution. Not only so, but the very same words and figures are used to describe the lot of the wicked which Job had previously used of his own destruction by God. Compare xxvii. 9, ix. 15 f.; xiii. 24, xix. 7, xxiii. 8 f.; xxvii. 11–23, ix. 22–4, xxi. and xxiv.; xxvii. 14 f., xxi. 8–11, 32 f.; xxvii. 18, xxi. 9; xxvii. 21, ix. 17, xxx. 22; xxvii. 22, xvi. 13; xxvii. 23, xvii. 6, xxx. 9–14; xxvii. 13, xx. 29.

If these words are retained for Job, then they are explained: (1) Job is modifying his previous one-sided charges against divine Providence. Having beaten the three friends in argument, he is now ready to unsay many things he has already said, and to admit that as a general rule the wicked are punished in the end (Delitzsch, Zöckler, Marshall). But it is rightly insisted that these verses are no mere modification, but an absolute contradiction of his previous words, and as blunt and as exaggerated as those had been. If these words are his, then his mind has turned a complete somersault to the position of the three. And there is no point of connexion with verses 1–6. (2) Cornill, Budde, Box, and others think that Job is ironical, parodying the opinions of the three, confounding them with their own words. They, knowing everything so well, had stressed the fact that the wicked will surely be punished. Let them take warning; their insinuations and charges against himself were wicked, and they will receive due retribution. But this is artificial; there is not a single indication that the ideas set forth are not those of the speaker himself. (3) The patriarch has now overcome his doubts as to the providential dealings of God. The words are an avowal of faith, significant of the reappearance of hope and trust in God (Ewald, Dillmann, Marshall). But,

if so, it was only temporary (as some agree) ; for in xxx. 20, 23, xxxi. 35–7 God is still regarded as harsh and an enemy. Besides, it is out of harmony with the later addresses of Yahweh in chapters xxxviii. ff. (4) The implicit reference in 7–10 is to Job's *past* condition ; the state of mind which is denied to the wicked is suggested by the memory of his own past condition, described in chapter xxix., when he had abundant proofs of the friendship of God. The words confirm 2–6, as though to say : How could one be tempted to sin if he knew so thoroughly the terrible mental condition into which the wrongdoer falls ? (So Driver, after Hengstenberg and Budde.) But this seems very unconvincing, and Driver later abandons it.

(*c*) If *chapter xxviii.* is retained for Job, serious difficulties are created. (1) The lesson of the section is : Wisdom belongs to God alone ; man cannot attain it ; the divine ways are inscrutable. This is stated in quiet, meditative, and reflective fashion. An atmosphere of serenity pervades the chapter. This is so unlike Job. Elsewhere he is not calm and subdued, but fierce and violently agitated, 'a chained eagle, who spreads his wings and dashes himself against the bars of his cage.' He demands to know, and, even after the three have ceased to trouble him, he is full of laments (xxx. 20–3, xxxi. 35). Further, if at this point the author represented Job as reaching a submissive and subdued frame of mind in which he had attained the sense of Wisdom's unattainability, it is not easy to account for the later introduction of the speeches of Yahweh, with their similar message and ironical tone. Was it not from the words of God that Job is represented as learning his lesson of settled trust ? But, if these are the words of Job, he had already learnt that from his own insight. (2) His sufferings and problem are never mentioned. (3) The style is different, the literary art somewhat more conscious than in the context. The divine names used in the dialogue are avoided (Driver-Gray, p. 232 ;

Davidson, p. xxxix. ; *Enc. Biblica*, p. 2482). (4) No easy connexion with chapter xxvii. can be traced (see Peake and Driver-Gray, in loc.).

On the opposite side it is said : (1) That the author may have conceived Job to have *temporarily* reached a calm and tranquil state of mind, marked by acquiescence in the wisdom of the providence of God. But, if so, as Driver admits, a psychological falsity is apparent ; for the patriarch has not been moved by the words of the three, and Yahweh has not yet spoken. (2) Others think that Job, finding he cannot solve his perplexities by the exercise of his intellect, is compelled in despair to recognize that this is due to the divine Wisdom being unattainable by man. But there is not the slightest accent of despair or dissatisfaction in the chapter. 'The speaker is calm and reflective, and, to all appearances, satisfied that things are as we see them because they could not be otherwise' (Davidson, p. 201).

The chapter is almost certainly a later insertion. Possibly verses 9–11 originally followed 4 or 6, verses 7–8 after 12, and verse 24 may have followed 11. Verse 28 may be a still later insertion, as it contradicts the former view that wisdom is unattainable by man. The LXX omits verses 14–19, and Budde strikes out 15–20 as well as 5 f. and 24. Probably (see Driver-Gray, p. 235, and Peake, p. 246) the poem is complete, and not an excerpt from a larger work. Sellin thinks the chapter a later insertion by the same author as the rest when in a different frame of mind.

F. Chapters xxix.–xxxi.[1]

Marshall thinks that xxvii. 7–23 is from Job, and, indeed, his retraction, the original poem passing from xxvii. 23 to xlii. 7, and chapters xxix.–xxxi. form the first later insertion into the poem. Buhl also connects chapter xxvii. directly with the epilogue. But this is

[1] Driver-Gray, Peake, and Strahan, in loc. ; *Enc. Biblica*, pp. 2476, 2479.

hardly likely, though Sellin finds in these chapters a somewhat different style from the rest. In reality, the whole section is the counterpart to the monologue in chapter iii., which preceded the dialogue. The debate is finished ; no further notice is taken of the three ; it is Job's final soliloquy, and wholly personal. Many scholars place xxix. 21–5 after xxix. 10 ; xxx. 2–8 (or 1–8) perhaps originally followed xxiv. 5 ff., and xxxi. 14 after xxxi. 17. Chapter xxxi. 38–40*b* is certainly out of place. It should come earlier in the chapter—just where is not clear.

With respect to other possible interpolations or dislocations the standard commentaries and dictionaries must be consulted.

VIII. Date[1]

The *external* evidence proves that the book with the Elihu passages added was in existence about 100 B.C. ; for a passage from the historian Aristeas shows acquaintance with a Greek translation of it. Ben Sira (*c.* 180 B.C.) was also familiar with it, as a comparison of passages proves (iv. 7, Sir. ii. 10 ; xxviii. 27, Sir. i. 9 ; xxxi. 18, Sir. iv. 10 ; cf. xlix. 8–10). But only *internal* evidence can settle the question with any degree of exactitude.

While Job is represented as living in patriarchal times (cf. i.–ii., xlii.), this is due to the author giving such colour to the narrative as befitted a story of one living in that age. When carefully examined, the book itself betrays many indications of a much later period. (1) References to history (xii. 13–25), to various classes of society (xxiv., xxx. 1–8), to an established system of judicial procedure (xxxi. 9–11, 26–8, 35 f. ; cf. xiii. 18 ff., ix. 14–19), to judgement at the gate (xxix. 7, xxxi. 21 ; cf. Amos v. 10), to the law (xxii. 6, xxiv. 9, pledges ; xxii. 27, vows ; xxiv. 2, landmarks), all

[1] *Commentaries* of Driver–Gray, pp. lxv. ff. ; Peake, pp. 37 ff. ; Davidson, pp. lv. ff. ; Driver, *L. O. T.* 431 ff. ; Hastings' *D. B.* ii. 666–71 ; *Enc. Biblica*, pp. 2485 ff.

point to a larger experience, a more settled form of life, and a more advanced state of society than that of the nomadic patriarchal period. (2) Unlike the patriarchs, Job is represented as a monogamist, and living in a monogamic form of society, such a state not prevailing until later (ii. 9 f., xix. 17, xxxi. 10 ; in xxvii. 15 read, with LXX, 'their widows'). (3) Clear evidences are present of great social and political disturbances and distress—that is, sufferings beyond those of the individual hero himself. The time is one of general despondency. The writer seems familiar with the great convulsions and miseries due at least to the Assyrian and Babylonian conquests of the eighth and sixth centuries, and it may be even the Persian upheaval later (iii. 18 ff., vii. 1, ix. 24, xii. 6 f., 17–25, xiv. 1 f., xxiv. 12, xv. 19). (4) The speculative character of the contents of the book suggests that already there had been a long period of reflection on its problem. The elementary stages of discussion have passed. Sellin, among others, does indeed show that the discussion of the problem of the suffering of the righteous can be found in Egypt and Babylon even in the second millennium B.C. ; nevertheless, the problem first arises in Israel in Jeremiah (xii. 1 f.) and Habakkuk (i. 13 f.), that is, in the sixth century. If Job typifies the suffering Israel, some think that the Exilic period is most suitable to the questioning spirit displayed ; others argue for the post-Exilic period after the reforms of Ezra–Nehemiah in 458–432 B.C. (or 445–397), on the ground that only then did the keen sense of national righteousness arise. Other scholars who do not accept the Job=Israel theory reach the same result in another way. To them our book deals with individual suffering ; there is strongly implied the religious value of the single personality altogether apart from the nation. Now this implies a late period in the development of Old Testament thought, for the recognition of the individual and the discussion of his problems were later than the time of Jeremiah and Ezekiel, when

protests were raised against the doctrine of solidarity (Deut. xxiv. 16 ; Jer. xxxi. 29 f. ; Ezek. xviii. and xxxiii.). The national problem was raised before the personal one. (5) The book is highly finished literature. The theme is developed in a masterly fashion, and indicates, in its illustrations and references, wide intellectual and social interests. The author seems to have travelled and to have had wide experiences. All these point to an age of advanced history and ripe literary culture. (6) The monotheism is wonderfully lofty, and indicates an even later stage than in Deutero-Isaiah. For in the prophet there is still a conflict against paganism, while, in Job, monotheism is simply presupposed, assumed as accepted even by non-Israelites (i. 6, xxxi. 26–8). (7) The ethical ideas are well developed and 'surprisingly inward,' and show that the prophetic conceptions have had time to bear fruit. They seem later than Jeremiah's doctrine of the New Covenant. See xxix. 12 ff. and chapter xxxi. (8) The worship of the sun and moon (xxxi. 26–8) does not seem to have appeared in Israel until the eighth and seventh centuries (2 Kings xxi. 3, 5, xvi. 10, xvii. 16). (9) The nearest parallels to the highly developed angelology are to be found in the late book of Daniel. Cf. xv. 15 and Dan. iv. 14 ; v. 1 and Dan. x. 13, 20, xii. 11. See Chapter V. (10) The Satan is found in the Old Testament only here and Zech. iii. 1 (519 B.C.), 1 Chron. xxi. 1 (*c.* 300–250 B.C.). The conception seems more developed than in the prophet, but earlier than in the chronicler. See Chapter V. (11) It will be seen from Chapter V. that though Job was acquainted with the conception of a life after death, and rose to the thought of vindication after death, nevertheless this was not a full belief in resurrection and a real immortality. Now this idea is found clearly in Isa. xxiv.–xxvii. (*c.* 340–32 B.C.) and Dan. xii. 2 (*c.* 167 B.C.), and even in the LXX version of Job. It is hard to believe that our author would have made so little of the doctrine had

it been a common belief. Therefore the book must be earlier than Daniel, but late enough for the question to arise as to the possibility of a life after death. Sellin (p. 221), however, minimizes the force of this argument, holding that the Jews 'were familiar with the idea from early times through the Canaanites and Egyptians' (cf. Hos. vi. 1 ff.). (12) If Job is = Israel, then some scholars, who refer the reader to Isa. lxi. 7, Zech. ix. 12, and Jer. xvi. 14–18, argue that the double possessions of Job in the epilogue (xlii. 10, 12) indicate the return from captivity. (13) The evidence offered by the language is differently appraised by scholars. Yet the Aramaisms, the words explained only by Arabic, the vocabulary and syntax, while indicating a date earlier than Esther, Daniel, Ecclesiastes, and Chronicles, all point to a relatively late period.

(14) The parallels[1] with other Old Testament books afford evidence which has been variously appraised. Decisions on literary connexions are often very unsure, as they not seldom rest upon subjective considerations, and, besides, the date of the other book may itself be altogether uncertain. Space will permit mention of only the more important questions of literary affiliation. (*a*) *Jeremiah.* It is difficult to believe in such cases as iii. 3–10 (= Jer. xx. 14–18), xix. 7 (= Jer. xx. 8), vi. 15 (= Jer. xv. 18), that Job is not the more literary borrower than that the prophet in his great cries of anguish was not spontaneous. (*b*) In vii. 17, Job bitterly parodies *Psalm* viii. 4. This psalm seems dependent upon the creation story of the Priestly document of the Hexateuch, published about 444 B.C. Hence Job must be later. It is clear, though Sellin disagrees, that the author knew P (xlii. 17; Gen. xxv. 8, xxxv. 29). (*c*) *Proverbs* xiii. 9 and xxiv. 20 should be compared with Job xviii. 5 f. and xxi. 17;

[1] Lists in Driver-Gray, p. lxviii.; Cheyne, *Job and Solomon*, pp. 83 ff.; Zöckler, pp. 258 ff.; Cheyne, *Isaiah*, vol. i., p. 228, vol. ii., pp. 203, 249 f., 259 ff.; Hastings' *D. B.* ii. 670 f.; Naish in *Expositor*, February 1925, pp. 96 ff.

viii. 25 with Job xv. 7 ; iii. 13–15, viii. 10 f., 19 with Job xxviii. 15–19, &c. Job xxviii., with its despair of finding wisdom, seems later than Prov. i.–viii., with its possibility of attaining it. But chapter xxviii. is a later insertion in Job. Further, in Proverbs there is no problem of suffering ; the doctrine there is entirely positive—the old fixed law of the inseparable connexion of piety with prosperity and wickedness with suffering. In our book the problem has become a very real one. It would seem that Job represents a later stage of protest and searching criticism of such incomplete generalizations as were popular in the time of Proverbs. Yet, as Toy (*Proverbs*, p. xxvi.) insists, the later unquestioning attitude of Ben Sira (180 B.C.), and the sceptical spirit mentioned in Malachi (fifth century B.C.), prove that the unquestioning and the critical spirit could run concurrently for several centuries and represent two different classes of thinkers, the one concerned only with practical duties, the other with the great problems of religion and ethics. (*d*) *Malachi* ii. 17 and iii. 14 f., in their critical, questioning spirit, provide such very close similarities to our book as to render it probable that the two works were written at a time not far distant from each other. (*e*) *Deutero-Isaiah.* Job contains many parallels in both thought and language, and especially with the ' Servant of the Lord ' sections (Isa. xlii. 1–4, xlix. 1–6, l. 4–9, lii. 13–liii. 12). The student should compare these selections from the material (the first-given numbers refer to Job) : i. 8 and liii. 9, 11 ; ix. 8 and xliv. 24, xlv. 12 ; xii. 9 and xli. 20 ; xiii. 19 and l. 8 ; xiii. 28 and l. 9 ; xiv. 2 and xl. 6 f. ; xv. 35 and lix. 4 ; xvi. 10, xxx. 10 and l. 6 ; xvi. 17 and liii. 9 ; xix. 14 and liii. 3 ; xxvi. 12 f. and li. 9 ; xlii. 10 and liii. 12. Both Job and the Servant of Yahweh are righteous but suffering servants of God, deemed smitten by Him, represented as diseased, harshly judged by their fellows, ill treated, confident of being finally vindicated, and in the end restored. At the very least, it must be clear that both

books belong to the same atmosphere of thought, and cannot be far distant in origin. But which has the priority? The question is not easy; and the whole matter is made more complicated since it is still a moot point whether the Servant passages are by Deutero–Isaiah or by an earlier or later writer. Notice that, while in the Servant poems the doctrine of vicarious suffering is present, this idea is absent from Job. Since this is a conception showing greater development than those advanced in Job, it is argued by some students that, unless the two books be entirely independent, Job must be earlier, otherwise the writer would hardly have ignored so profound a suggestion. But this argument can be met. The Servant sections deal with national sufferings (the Servant = Israel), but in Job the pain is personal. Peake (p. 38) believes that the author of Job may have hesitated to apply to an individual the same explanation of his calamities as had been applied to a nation elected to a world-wide mission. Job had no such function to fulfil for others as had the chosen people. See again (6) for further arguments. Naish believes the writer to have been a personal disciple of Deutero–Isaiah.

To a very few scholars the evidence points to a pre-Exilic date; more think of the period just before the Exile or during it, but most place the book in the post-Exilic period. Probably somewhere near 400 B.C. is about right. This is the date favoured by Budde, Peake, E. Kautzsch, H. P. Smith, and Gordon. Sellin thinks of 600–450, Duhm 500–450, Bennett 350–332, Strahan and Kent 450, and N. Schmidt gives the period of the first Ptolemies (320 B.C.). Both Sellin and Naish think that the various sections were composed over a period of years by the same author, who subjected his original work to repeated revisions and additions as his views were modified. The latter excepts only the Elihu chapters, while Sellin thinks the prose sections are from an earlier writer. Those who find in the prologue and epilogue an earlier

prose-book used by the author of Job date it variously from the closing years of the monarchy (600–586 B.C.), or even later in the Persian period (538 ff. B.C.). With respect to the almost certainly later insertions—the Elihu chapters and chapter xxviii.—the first section is a century or two later than the rest, and chapter xxviii. belongs to about the third century B.C. (Driver–Gray).

IX. The Author

Various names have been brought forward : Moses, Solomon, Baruch, Jeremiah, Hezekiah, and Job himself. We must be satisfied in calling him the ' Great Unknown.' From internal evidences something can be gleaned about him. He was a very earnest, pious man, with a fine ethical standard, a hater of oppression and most tenderly sympathetic with those in distress. A Jew he certainly was, but one who had risen above national particularism. He was humanist enough to give his book an extra-Israelitish setting. His instinct for wide humanity shows in the way hardly anything distinctively Israelitish is visible in the work. The name Israel is not found, nor is there mention of the national Tora. Nevertheless, he has firmly grasped the fundamental principles of the Hebrew prophets, and works from them. The next chapter will reveal his greatness as a thinker, and of his poetic genius mention has already been made. He was learned in history, mythology, astronomy, the Wisdom lore of Israel and Edom, as well as the sacred books of his people. He seems to have been a traveller in Arabia and Egypt, as also in his native land. His book shows a fine appreciation of the sights and sounds of nature. Desert and caravan life are well known ; all the creatures—except the crocodile and hippopotamus—in the book are of the desert. Where he wrote is unknown. Various suggestions have been made—Egypt,[1] south of Judah, on the edge of the desert ; south-east, not far from Edom, &c.

[1] Sugden, *Israel's Debt to Egypt*, pp. 185 ff.

It is sure that the work is largely autobiography. Its writer has disclosed the workings of his own heart and mind. Clearly he had passed through the fires of affliction. He had known doubt of God, had struggled with despair, been baffled often as he pondered the various solutions offered to account for suffering. Many a time had he given way to bitter complaints. The inadequacy of the current explanations of the meaning of pain, with their ignoring of plain facts, was all too apparent to him. But in the end he had won his way to settled peace of mind, and rested his troubled spirit in close fellowship with God.

Chapter V

THE BOOK OF JOB

B.—THE TEACHING

(1) The author is a teacher with a definite purpose in mind. He is far more than just a poet endeavouring to set forth some elements in the contemporary controversies about the problem of suffering regarded as insoluble. He feels he has something of value to contribute. Certain common views concerning God and the significance of affliction are set aside, and God vindicated against narrow and one-sided views of His attitude.

The *main* aim was negative—to combat the traditional theory that piety and prosperity, and sin and suffering, were absolutely inseparable. This view was not confined to the Hebrews, for it appears in the Greeks: Homer (*Od.* i. 33 ff.), Aeschylus (*Supp.* 403 f.; *Pers.* 821 f.); and others. In Israel it was the orthodox belief for centuries. Affliction is due to divine anger with the sufferer's sin. It always implies previous wrongdoing, while prosperity is clear proof of piety, being its reward (Exod. xxiii. 20 ff.; Deut. xi. 13–15, xxviii.; Lev. xxvi.; Isa. lviii. 7 ff., 13 ff.; Jer. vii. 5–7, xvii. 5–8, 19–27; Ps. i.; Prov. xii. 21, xiii. 21, xvi. 7, xix. 23, xxi. 21, xxii. 4). This is the conception firmly held by the three friends, as every one of their speeches proves.

In contradiction, the author leads on in the person of Job a perfectly upright man but a great sufferer, and, on the other hand, brings in instances of wickedness which prospers (i. 1, 8, ii. 3, xii. 6, xxi. 7 seq., &c.). He speaks through the patriarch. Of course, there is

no denial of the plain fact, apparent to all, that sin may issue in suffering (xiii. 10, 16, xix. 29), that, on the whole, it is well with the good and ill with the bad. In a most brilliant fashion the three are made to expound the orthodox position, which has much to commend it. But what might be true as a general rule was certainly incorrect when applied to the particular case of Job. Upon his righteousness the whole work is based. He suffered, but he was not such a sinner as deserved the divine displeasure. Therefore affliction does not *necessarily* imply previous wickedness. The book is an indignant protest, shattering such an opinion on the rock of fact. As the poem develops, the three friends are routed in argument. It is evident that the old cast-iron orthodoxy has been discarded as not bearing the weight of facts. God's apportionment of sorrow or joy is no indication of the operation of retributive justice alone. A good man may suffer and a bad man be successful ; the divine attitude is not fully indicated by His external treatment of him. The author pleads for truer thoughts of God. He is not a sceptic or a cynic. He had held the traditional view himself, but time had proved to the hilt its insufficiency. And yet, so unlike many modern thinkers in the same position, he could not let go his grip upon God, but shows us how he came to understand Him.

But, while the chief aim is the destruction of the orthodox theory, it must not be supposed that the writer's only purpose was negative. It is too much to say, with Marshall,[1] 'that every solution which, so far as we know, the human mind has ever offered to explain the anomalies of suffering is anticipated, and either hinted at or elaborated, in the Book of Job.' But it is true that no ancient work is so deep and impressive in the treatment of its theme, and nearly all[2] that is most profound in Old Testament thinking on

[1] *Job and his Comforters*, p. 19. A good little book, far more valuable to the serious student than its title suggests. [2] But see pp. 130, 170.

pain is set forth here, while the fuller revelation in Jesus only serves to enhance still further the value of its words. And so, while there is no attempt at solving the entire problem, and no speculative and theoretical answers to Job's problem are forthcoming—and, indeed, no complete intellectual solution has yet been found anywhere—nevertheless the prologue and epilogue, the speeches of Yahweh and Elihu, &c., do offer partial solutions or suggestions, or show the way of escape into a region where the problem ceases to obsess the mind of the suffering saint.

The religious problem is not, as Dr. A. M. Fairbairn thought,[1] peculiar to Israel. It is not a philosophical, but a religious protest when the Greek gnomic poet Theognis writes : 'Dear Zeus, I am amazed at thee. Thou art monarch of all, and hast great power and honour, and dost well know the thoughts of each man's heart. Thy might, O King, is highest of all. How then, O son of Kronos, dost thou think fit to deal out the same portion to wicked and to just?' (373 ff.). 'How is it right that whoso stands aloof from unrighteous deeds, harbouring no transgression or sinful oath, but being righteous, should unjustly suffer?' (743 ff.). But it is the fact that the problem becomes more acute as the conception of God as ethical becomes more firmly fixed. Where the divine nature is held, as the Hebrew sage conceived it, to possess the qualities of omniscience, omnipotence, and, above all, perfect righteousness, the fact of innocent suffering imperatively demands attention and explanation in view of the stigma it seems to cast upon God. 'With the Israelites the sting of the problem arises out of the fact that the claim of justice is a claim on their God.'[2]

(2) The Views of the Three Friends

The three representatives of the orthodox thinking were real friends of Job. They had travelled long

[1] *The City of God*, p. 150.
[2] Cf. J. Pedersen, *Israel, its Life and Culture*, p. 367.

distances to afford him help and comfort, and they were honest, God-fearing men, never of set purpose unkind. Far from being represented as straw puppets, they are led on the stage to say some very fine things in splendid fashion. For example, the first speech of Eliphaz is a masterpiece of genius. They are all serious and thoughtful exponents of the traditional view that suffering is always a judgement upon previous wickedness. Yet their utterances are cold, and throughout reveal no real sympathy with the patriarch's position. They ignore his unbearable pain, and its consequent mental anguish and loss of balance. Evidently knowing little of affliction from personal experience, they cannot sympathetically understand the natural breakdown of patience under repeated blows of misfortune. Otherwise they would not have interpreted his fierce charges against divine Providence as proofs of settled impiety, instead of the passing phases of a soul in tortured anguish. Job was a sinner ; his pain proved it. All protestations of innocence are vain. They do not see that, while their orthodox view as a general principle was true, it was false when given special application to his case. They balance their hard shell-back creed against their friend, hold on to it even though it meant losing him, and shut their eyes to plain facts rather than allow their presuppositions to be wrong. The thought never seems to have crossed their minds that their position might be false. No wonder they were only irritants and ' miserable comforters ' (xvi. 2).

What evils result from a wrong creed, from narrow conceptions of the divine character ! And even so when men who hold these are otherwise kindly and honest. The God of these men is the irresponsible deity of the Moslem, the deification of sheer omnipotence and absolute power. Right and wrong are simply what He commands. Strictly just, He is also cold, unemotional, distant, an inscrutable and passionless Sublimity. A fine type of religion cannot breathe in such an atmosphere. All the emphasis is

upon man's attitude to God, with no concern as to His conduct towards man. Hence to the three the only right attitude of the afflicted patriarch was abject and unquestioning submission.

Further, holding on to the old view of the solidarity of the family, with its comparative indifference to the claims of the individual, they claimed that the moral character of a man was rewarded or punished in the adversity or prosperity of his children (v. 4, xx. 10, xxi. 19, xxvii. 14). His descendants were really part of himself. Even where one seemed to escape punishment for sin, he, when dead, suffered in the ills of his dependants. The author of Job, in repudiating this conception, shows that he has travelled a long way from the thought of 1 Kings xi. 12 and xxi. 29. There it is said that the divine mercy is shown in postponing retribution for wickedness until after death, and allowing it to fall upon his son. Again, like the Greek Theognis,[1] whose words are worthy of comparison, Job objects that such procedure is unjust. The dead sinner, now in Sheol and entirely ignorant of the earthly affairs of even his nearest and dearest (xiv. 21), is really not punished at all. Let God afflict a man for his own sin, and let him feel it himself (xxi. 19). Job —or, rather, the author—lived at a time when the value of the individual was being realized, and the old conception of the absorption of the man in the clan or family was becoming obsolete.

In the *First Round* of speeches the three started by assuming that Job was a righteous, God-fearing man. But, since human nature is frail, no one was free from sin, not even Job, whose heart was set towards God

[1] He prays that the sinner 'should himself atone for his evil deeds, and that the wickedness of the father should not in aftertime become a bane to his children ; but when the children of an unjust father follow after the right in thought and word, reverencing thy truth, O son of Kronos, and loving justice from the first among their fellow citizens, let them not pay for the transgressions of their fathers. May such be agreeable to the blessed gods ; as it is, the doer escapes, and some one else bears the punishment' (735 ff. ; cf. 205 ff.).

and goodness (iv. 6–7). Some grievous slips must have been his to account for the pain. Stress is laid by Eliphaz upon suffering as not so much punitive as educational, chastening sent in love to wean him from any evil spoiling his otherwise blameless life. But, as they observe his violent resentment against God and entire absence of submission under the divine stroke, they feel compelled, in the later speeches, to set aside this opinion and to regard his affliction as purely a punishment for very heinous wickedness. In this first stage of the debate an endeavour is made to overwhelm him with thoughts of the divine nature. Eliphaz speaks of His awful purity and universal goodness, Bildad of His unchanging and discriminating righteousness in the government of the world, Zophar of the inscrutability and omniscience of His wisdom. The righteous enjoy His favour ; the fate of the wicked is dreadful. Such words, of course, leave Job still more alienated. The assumption behind them that he has sinned only further irritates. He knows he has not, in his manhood, committed such sins as to deserve this treatment from God, and even before Him boldly maintains his integrity (xiii. 23–8). Words like these of the three are all beside the mark, and are inappropriate when vented on him.

In the *Second Round* the three, now more firmly convinced of his essential wickedness by the shocking irreverence of Job's speeches (cf. xv. 4–6), ply him with thoughts not so much of God as of the evildoer. To bring him to a sense of guilt, pictures of the divine wrath on the wicked are painted in flaming colours. Not yet, however, is he explicitly charged with wickedness. The remarks are only general ; but, if the words fit his case, he may apply them to himself, and very probably he was intended so to do. Each has his own way of regarding the punishment of the wrongdoer. Eliphaz stresses the inworking of conscience. External prosperity does not produce the happiness it might by reason of apprehensions of disaster. In Bildad certain

retribution comes from 'the moral order in the world and the moral sense in man, which rose up against wickedness' (Davidson). The light of the wicked is always put out. Zophar's main point is that, while unrighteousness for a brief space of time may appear successful, it carries with it its own retribution. The sinner's doom is sure. Ill-gotten wealth is like a dainty turned to poison within the stomach, and must be disgorged.[1] Job is only further exasperated. The friends are felt to be not so much concerned in reaching the real truth about him as holding on to their rigid orthodoxy.

In the *Third Round* they come out into the open and declare explicitly what previously they had left to be inferred. Job is a very wicked man. Direct accusations of very grievous sins are hurled against him. Yet it is to be noticed that Eliphaz is not able to smother altogether his kindly feelings to his old friend; for he holds out the comforting prospect of felicity if he will forsake his wickedness and reconcile himself with God (xxii. 21 ff.).

While all three hold to the one main theory, each contributes some special ancillary teaching to support it, setting forth some distinct aspect of the same belief.

(*a*) *Eliphaz*

Eliphaz was the most considerate and kindly of the friends; for even his last harsh speech closes with promise of future happiness on repentance. Yet his tone was that of the dignified, stately lecturer rather than the sympathetic friend. The oldest man (xv. 10), with widest range of thought, and something of the prophet about him, intense in religious conviction, a mystic recipient of heavenly visions and revelations, he is a man of weight, and, like the others, of well-defined individuality.

One special emphasis in the first of the friends is the

[1] It is interesting to compare Amen-em-ope's admonition adapted in Prov. xxiii. 6, 8. See p. 44.

argument for the universality of suffering from the universality of sin. And sin is due to the general imperfection and frailty of man's nature, which makes sin, and consequently punishment, inevitable. With so weak an organism, dwelling in so fragile a house of clay, sin is natural and affliction certain (iv. 12–21, v. 7 ?, xv. 14). Job himself gave expression to a somewhat similar thought (xiv. 1–4 ; verse 4 may be a gloss). Cf. Pss. ciii. 14, lxxviii. 38 f.

Another outstanding lesson is that of the disciplinary nature of affliction (v. 17, xv. 11). It is not merely punitive, but may be sent in love by God for the benefit of the sufferer, to purify and wean him from his sin. If rightly and submissively accepted, blessedness ensues ; rebelliously received, he is cut off (iv. 5 f.; v. 2, 8; v. 23 ff., xv. 4, 11). Marshall (pp. 53 f.), and Strahan (*Book of Job*, p. 68), contrary to the opinion of most students, deny that v. 17 refers to suffering as educational and purificatory, resulting in moral benefits to men. The word ' blessed ' has no ethical significance, nor is there in the verse any thought of the divine love. Affliction is due to God's anger, but, if patiently borne, prosperity and joy will be the outcome. At the most the passages given think of pain as a probation, a test of character. It is chastisement for sin, the issue depending on the submissive or rebellious manner in which it is received.[1] This view is not so probable.

(*b*) *Bildad*

The second friend is inferior in every way to the other two. Cox thinks his tone severer than that of Eliphaz, but in the first speech, at any rate, his attitude is milder. He is a representative traditionalist, an erudite Sage with a mind stored with ancient moral wisdom, to which he loves to appeal. He is no seer, like Eliphaz, and dares not to say anything in his own name.

His special message is that, even if the righteous do

[1] Cf. the Targum paraphrase on Eccles. vii. 8 ff.

suffer and the wicked prosper, this is only temporary ; it does not last long. God always recompenses according to desert. Such apparent anomalies of Providence soon cease. The success of the impious is short-lived, their doom being sure and sudden, and the sufferings of the good will speedily be over. Marshall compares Pss. xxxvii. 10, 35, lxxiii. 17. It is the teaching of Habakkuk also.

(*c*) *Zophar*

The third friend is much more rough, rasping, and violent than the others. A somewhat coarse disputant, with no misgivings as to his own views, he is a difficult individual to differ from. He has intense personal convictions based neither on mystic revelations nor traditional lore but upon his own private judgement. But, far from uttering merely wordy commonplaces, he exhibits, according to Peake, intellectual power the equal to Eliphaz and comparing favourably with Bildad, and by Marshall is classed as a thinker and the philosopher of the three.

Following Bildad, he lays special emphasis on the brevity of the prosperity of the wicked (xx. 5, xxvii. 18), but his main contribution is that the Omniscient God knows better than man his wrongdoing. He is far more sinful than he thinks. God sees the very heart, knows the sins of which the sinner, owing to his obtuseness, is unconscious, and brings them to his remembrance. Because of the awfulness of the divine purity, sin is far more dreadful in God's eyes than men usually suppose, and really deserves much more severe retribution than is meted out to it (cf. xi. 7 ff.). Marshall (74 f.), who, however, denies to Eliphaz the idea of affliction as the discipline of divine love [see (*a*) above], thinks that the view of Zophar has best stood the test of time. That the prosperity of the wicked and the adversity of the pious is short-lived (Bildad) is often very contrary to experience ; that affliction tests a man, revealing his hidden wickedness

or latent nobility of character (Eliphaz), is fine and true even in the light of subsequent thinking ; yet the idea that suffering may be sent to compel us to ask that it may be revealed what is the wickedness which is getting the better of us is of even greater value.

(3) Elihu, the Man and his Message[1]

The average modern reader is not very much impressed by Elihu. He seems an arrogant, pompous youth, whose bold dogmatism and cocksureness arising from an inflated value of his own importance are worthy of severe censure. Bede, following the Jerusalem Talmud, identifies him with Balaam, while the Testament of Job thought him full of the spirit of Satan. Some (e.g. Briggs) have concluded that such a character was led on by the original author as a sort of burlesque, his intention being to ridicule him as a representative of self-conceited and inexperienced youth, with little or nothing of value to add to the discussion. Thus he is a literary foil, preparing the way for the speeches of Yahweh. This is unlikely ; for it must be remembered that an Eastern reader would regard far less unfavourably than we the extraordinary claims to wisdom and bombastic self-commendations. In adding this section, its author is simply revealing his own temper and mind, or, rather, the characteristics of a circle of thinkers to which he belonged. No burlesque is intended. The writer is perfectly serious, his very positiveness being due to a consciousness of divine inspiration which gave authority even to youth to speak.

Some writers have exaggerated the importance of Elihu's contribution ; nevertheless, we must not minimize its value. It may be true that he adds very little to the conceptions presented by the three friends, yet he gives utterance to some exceedingly fine thoughts. Reverential insight into the ways of God is an outstanding characteristic of a man of exceedingly devout

[1] Cf. Davidson, pp. xl. ff., 221 ff. ; Driver-Gray, pp. 277 ff. ; Peake, pp. 21 ff., 274 ff.

spirit. The very fact that some present-day critics find in his speech the only positive solution of the problem of the book and its most profound teaching should be a warning against undue depreciation. He, however, seems to be a thinker defending a general thesis, suggested by the patriarch's charges against God, rather than one in contact with the realities of the particular case of Job, to whose circumstances he hardly refers.

His views, as already mentioned, do not materially add to the arguments of the three.[1] Like them, he teaches (*a*) that all suffering is due to the sin of the sufferer (xxxiii. 9–10, 23–7, xxxiv. 37, xxxvi. 9) ; (*b*) that the righteous character of God must not be impugned (xxxiv. 10 f., xxxv. 10–13, xxxvi. 6) ; (*c*) that Job was a sinner (xxxiv. 7 f., 36 f., xxxvi. 16 f.). (*d*) His main contribution, however, is that suffering is not necessarily punitive, but, while sent on account of sin, is rather a disciplinary and remedial education, a divine paedagogic. Expressive of the loving and gracious purpose of God rather than His wrath, affliction is intended to make man better, to secure his moral well-being, to perfect and correct his character, to purge him of sin, to wean him from the evil which leads to destruction. But all depends on the manner in which such discipline is received. Wrongly taken, in a sullen and rebellious spirit, it leads to ruin, but, rightly accepted as the refining fire of God, it issues in blessing (xxxiii. 15–30, xxxvi. 8–25). Some students (Marshall, Strahan ; see on Eliphaz, above) regard this main teaching as entirely new with Elihu, but the majority rightly find the same doctrine in Eliphaz (v. 17 f. and perhaps xxii. 22). All that is done is to expand and lay greater emphasis upon the suggestion of the earlier speaker.

Certain other features, in which some differences from the thought of the three may possibly be detected, should be noticed. (*e*) To the three, suffering is

[1] Cf. Davidson, pp. xlii. ff., for (*a*) to (*e*).

primarily punitive. That was their settled conviction, though Eliphaz at first had leaned to the idea of a disciplinary education of divine love. But Elihu nowhere thinks of it as purely punitive ; it is rebellion against the corrections of God which renders them destructive. (*f*) To the three, God is above all an arbitrary Monarch and severe Judge ; to Elihu he was mainly the wonderful unrivalled Teacher, leading men prepared to open their hearts to instruction, by various lessons—in dreams, angel messages, and sufferings—to truer ways of living (xxxvi. 22, xxxiii. 14 ff., xxxiv. 32, xxxv. 11, xxxvi. 9 f.). (*g*) Davidson (pp. xliv., xlvii., 230) thinks that Elihu regards affliction as not only remedial, but preventive, sent to warn against sins one is liable to commit. But xxxiii. 17, as Davidson admits, probably refers to actual sin rather than potential. (*h*) Marshall (86 ff.), who sees a correspondence to the New Testament doctrine of the Spirit of God, lays emphasis on Elihu's doctrine of angel mediation. If affliction is not to sour and harden, but sanctify and purify the sufferer, angelic mediation and intercession are necessary to save the sinner from ruin and to lead him to repentance. Spiritual agency is essential. If heaven-sent dreams fail to restrain from wickedness, then sore affliction follows, but an angel is needed to reveal to the wrongdoer his sin, to interpret the loving purpose of the pain, to intercede for him, to lead to repentance, and hence to a renewal of fellowship with God (xxxiii. 14–30). But, as Peake and Driver-Gray point out, while the angelology is more developed in Elihu, the dream, as also angel instruction and intercession, is to be found in the first speech of Eliphaz (chapter v.). (*i*) In xxxv. 10 ff. (xxxiv. 29 is of doubtful interpretation) it is taught why the cries and prayers of sufferers are unheard by God. The reason is that it is not really Him they are seeking, but freedom from their pains. Having no really religious spirit, they are not teachable and willing to receive that disciplinary education which, if accepted rightly,

would have led them to sing songs of joy even in the midnight of affliction. (*j*) Marshall (150 ff.), who in other respects rates the teaching of this section very highly, believes that in such passages as xxxii. 8, 18, xxxiii. 4, xxxiv. 12–15, and xxxv. 11, &c., the high-water mark is touched of the biblical conception of the spirituality of God and His indwelling within man. A very real difference from the thought of the three is discovered, and in this Strahan (pp. 270, 288) agrees. The friends are deists ; their God is the Omnipotent Judge and Sovereign, cold and distant, a transcendent deity of rigid justice and absolute power. Elihu combines with transcendence the doctrine of the divine immanence, ' God as the Omnipresent Spirit, sustaining the world, and enlightening the mind of man by His all-penetrating energy.' Here Elihu is more prophet than sage. One feels that this is to place too great a valuation on the young man's teaching. In xxxv. 5–8 Elihu is at one with Eliphaz (xxii. 2 f., 12 f.) in regarding God as a distant, passionless Ruler, too exalted to be hurt by man's sin or to be profited by his righteousness. His claim to a special wisdom, due to a divine inspiration not given to others (xxxii. 8, 18, xxxiii. 4), is an imitation of his prophetic predecessors. Yet we must not unduly depreciate his message because of its Oriental hyperbole. He does teach that what ' may be described either as man's spirit from its residing in man during life [so Ps. civ. 29], or as God's spirit from its originating with Him ' (xxxiv. 14 f., Ps. civ. 30), that ' spirit which is common to all men ' but which he feels ' is within him in a powerful degree, and gives him a higher wisdom than ordinary ' (Driver-Gray), is a source of understanding in man, an illumination of the human mind (xxxii. 8, xxxiii. 4). And in xxxiv. 14–15—one of the finest passages in the Old Testament —beautiful expression is given to the thought that if God's sustaining energy, His spirit, were to be suddenly withdrawn, all life would immediately perish.

It is evident that the writer of these chapters was

dissatisfied with the teaching of the rest of the book. Even Sellin (p. 214) agrees, though he regards them as written later by the same author as the ripest fruit of his thinking. But more probably he belongs to a later generation. Clearly he was deeply grieved at the patriarch's charges against God, which he felt to be irreverent and blasphemous. The three friends, too, had not made the best showing of their case. While in harmony with their fundamental principle that suffering proved previous sin, he expands and develops some of their ideas on which sufficient emphasis had not been laid. One such was the value of pain as the disciplinary education of divine love. In this he probably is the spokesman of an age in which this idea was more widely and firmly held than formerly. Probably, too, the solution of prologue and epilogue hurt him. At any rate, he ignores its explanation that Job was a righteous sufferer, and possibly he could not believe that God could have visited with affliction one who was so good as the prologue stated. Another reason is suggested by xxxii. 13 and xxxiii. 4–7 ; he was dissatisfied with the introduction by the first writer of the speeches of Yahweh. Why make God intervene in the debate when an inspired man like himself was equal to the task of refuting Job ?

Another theory has been propounded by Budde, Cornill, and Wildeboer, among others.[1] It is thought that this section is the work of the original poet, and, indeed, his only positive solution as well as the one most profound from the Old Testament point of view. Job, it is said, was from the first only outwardly a righteous man, though he sincerely thought himself such. All along he had been possessed of a subtle kind of self-righteousness ; for the germs of spiritual pride were within him, although unrecognized. The purpose of the divine dealings in affliction was to bring his pride to open expression, and then, being led to a

[1] Cf. Peake, pp. 24 ff. ; Driver-Gray, pp. lxiii. ff. ; Sellin, pp. 214, 219.

self-knowledge consonant with facts, to drive Job to repentance. Thus the purpose of the Elihu speeches is to show that suffering is divinely sent that a man may realize his hidden and latent spiritual pride, and seek to be purged from it. But against this view there are serious objections. Pride is mentioned only twice by Elihu (xxxiii. 17, xxxvi. 9)[1] ; and, further, why is it, if pride is intended to be cured by Elihu's teaching, this sin is not given greater and a steadily growing prominence in the previous speeches? Moreover, in the prologue there is not a single hint of any such latent sin in Job. His integrity is fully recognized by God Himself. Besides, if Job has been already taught his lesson by Elihu, what need is there for God to speak in order to produce submission? And was it not after the words of Yahweh, not the young man, that Job confessed his errors? Driver-Gray also rightly remind us that if it be spiritual pride which Elihu is specially condemning, it is indeed humorous from one so lacking in humility himself.

(4) The Words of Job a Series of Chapters in the History of a Soul

(*a*) *A Soul in Pain*

Our book discusses a very serious problem: Why do the righteous suffer? On this the author had something vital to say. But, as Peake remarks, the supreme interest of the book is that it is the history of a soul rather than the discussion of a problem. It affords a vivid and moving presentation of the soul-life of a sufferer as he fought his way to sure peace through a veritable tangle of doubts and perplexities.

We become intensely conscious of the fluctuating moods and clashing currents in the inner life of a great and fearless man pondering the meaning of his own sore pain. His feelings oscillate from one extreme to

[1] The former of these passages, however, is of doubtful interpretation, and the other does not so much imply subtle spiritual pride as defiant opposition to the divine will (Driver-Gray).

the other. At one time he holds on with convulsive grip to the goodness of God. At another he cries before Him for pity. In another oft-recurring mood he bitterly arraigns the divine providence. Defiant unbelief shakes his frame. God's rule is immoral; innocent man though he is, God has failed him, and even takes a fiendish delight in cruelly torturing him. Such a deity, the God of the traditional theory, indifferent to moral distinctions, caring nothing for righteousness, he does not hesitate to denounce. The patient, submissively meek man of the prologue is anything but such in the poem. No wonder the three were shocked and bewildered, and draw their own sombre conclusions! In a varying mood he cries out for the revelation of the divine presence. Mystified by his own sad lot, he prays that God would appear and solve the mystery. Indeed, much of his speech is nothing else but prayer—the prayers of a man craving to be told the meaning of his own sufferings. Ever baffled, yet with fearless sincerity, he would probe to the very bottom of the pains which oppressed his spirit. Yet again he feels (xiii. 15 f., xix. 25 ff.) that he can hope against hope, and be confident of a triumphant vindication at the hands of a loving Presence which will surely reveal itself. Dull of comprehension is the reader who sees in such fluctuations of spirit only poetic imagining. True, it is consummate artistry, but it is genius working on real experience. Any one who has been long in the deeps of anguish of body and mind will recognize the psychological truth of it all. Many a time during the dark years of the Great War has the present writer been strangely reminded of Job's wild complaints, cries after God, confident hope in Him, in one and the same sufferer.

The bitter recriminations of the poem are easily understood. Assuming as true their theory and point of view, the exasperation of the three was natural. If all suffering is due to the sin of the sufferer, then Job's affliction was the result of his wrongdoing, however

ignorant they, his friends, had been of such. More, his repeated claims to righteousness, and the apparent blasphemy and irreverence of his denunciations of God, served only to confirm them in their diagnosis of his condition, and to make them harder and less sympathetic. And matters were not helped by the patriarch himself. Rather they were made worse; for the wrong interpretations they put upon his pains, the fact that they disbelieved his protestations of innocence, led him to treat them with mordant tongue and withering sarcasm. They were 'plasterers of lies,' 'physicians of no value,' 'tormenting comforters.' Their profound words of wisdom were but trite platitudes, their arguments worthless, and they themselves persecutors devoid of pity (vi. 14–30, xii. 1–6, xiii. 1–12, xvi. 1–5, 20, xvii. 2, 5, xix. 1 ff., 5, 28, xxi. 3, 27 ff.). The fact is that Job on the one hand, and the three on the other, simply irritated one another. The poem is a transcript of experience.

The assertions of Job must not be misinterpreted; he does not claim absolute sinlessness. He clearly recognizes that he had sinned in his youth (xiii. 26); he admits that sins have been his (xiii. 23), and he knows that he shares in the universal sinfulness which is the common lot of mankind (vii. 20, x. 6, xiv. 4, 16 f., xix. 3–4).[1] What is repudiated is that he had been guilty of purposed and contumacious wickedness, that he had committed sins of such magnitude as deserved the divinely sent affliction. On the contrary, he had been a devoted servant of God; the whole trend of his life had been set against evil. Of great and wilful sinning he will not confess himself guilty. His conscience is clear, and before man, who misunderstands him, and God, who treats him as guilty though He knows him to be innocent, he will maintain his blamelessness and integrity (vi. 10, 29 f., ix. 20 f., x. 7, xiii. 13–15, 18, xvi. 17, xxi. 16, xxiii. 1–7,

[1] In vii. 20 and xix. 3 f. Job may be granting sin only for the sake of argument.

10–12, xxvii. 2, 5 f., xxix. 11 ff., xxxi. ; cf. i. 1, 8, ii. 3, 9 f.).

A feature in the debate is that Job addresses himself only in part to the three friends. Again and again he ignores them, as if they were not there at all. Sometimes it is God to whom he speaks (vii. 7 ff., ix. 28*b*–31, xvii. 3 f., xxx. 20–3) ; at other times he muses with himself (iii. ; ix. 25 ff., 32–5, xvi. 16 f., 20–2 ; xvii. 1 f., 5–9, 11–17, xxiii.–xxiv., xxix.–xxxi.). Peake (p. 11) draws attention to the disputants development of their arguments with small account of the case presented by the opposing side, the absence of that searching criticism of the other case characteristic of our Western writers. It is noteworthy that, as the three become more harsh and vituperative, Job is more calm and dignified. Less and less is he disposed to argue with them, more and more is he concerned with his relations to God, his one care being where he might find Him.

Job's thoughts alternated now towards light and hope and again towards darkness and despair. He had held the same general theory as the friends. The only righteous reason for affliction was wrongdoing. But he knew that he had not so sinned as to deserve such pain as was his. Therefore in his case, at any rate, no just reason was in operation. Hence he was being unrighteously visited by the wrath of God, and the consciousness that He who had been such a Friend to him was now changed was veritable agony to his soul. Yet again his mind was gripped with other thoughts : God was good, and in the end would vindicate his integrity. These two ways of thinking must now be considered.

(*b*) *Job's Pessimism and Mistaken Views of God*

In the one frame of mind, Job knows that all life is an evil business. Preferable was it to have died in infancy or have been an abortion. Death was a boon

for which he craved (iii., vi. 8–10, vii. 15 f., x. 1, 18 f.).[1] Man's earthly lot is a misery ; for Job understands that his own case is not singular. Melancholy oppresses his spirit as he looks out on the world. God is not just and good. Rather is He to the patriarch the deification of immeasurable power, a dread Being swayed by no law or restraint, untouched by love or righteousness, arbitrary and capricious in decisions. Job's experience seemed to tell of an irresponsible Judge and Tyrant condemning creatures to punishment, yet all along ignoring every appeal for a hearing. The sad facts of life showed a deity who deliberately and relentlessly persecuted a man whom He knew to be good, One unmoved by ethical distinctions, the favourer of the wicked. Towards Job, God had proved Himself an Almighty Spy, watching for opportunities to punish. Even his past experience of the divine mercies had been only a sham, a skilful plan to lull him into a feeling of security, but hiding a malignant and diabolical purpose (x. 12 ff.). These are terrible views to hold,[2] yet that they are a fair presentation of one attitude of Job's mind will be seen if the following passages are carefully read : vi. 4, vii. 1, 6, 12–21, ix. 11 to end, x. 6 ff., 16 ff., xii. 6, 16, xiii. 21–8, xiv. 1–3, 6, 16–7, xvi. 7–17, xvii. 6, xix. 6 ff., 21 ff., xxi. 7 to end, xxiii. 15–17, xxiv. 1 ff., xxvii. 2 f., xxx. 11, 19 ff.

Such a God made His own right and wrong. Omnipotence could make a man guilty though he knew himself to be innocent. Arbitrary Power decided one's guilt or innocence, whether one was really such or not, and against such a decree there is no appeal or redress (ix. 1 ff., 13, 28 ff. ; cf. Elihu in xxxiv. 17).

[1] A not infrequent wish of the Greek melancholy spirit. ' Of all things to men on earth it is best not to be born, nor to see the beams of the piercing sun, but, once born, as swiftly as may be to pass the gates of Hades and lie under a heavy heap of earth ' (Theognis, 425 ff.). In similar strain, Bacchylides (v. 160 f.), Sophocles (*Oedip. Col.* 1225 f.), Euripides (*Frs.* 285, 449), Herodotus (v. 4).

[2] Bertholet's dictum : ' Israel did not breed Promethean natures,' thus needs some qualification.

Like Eliphaz (xxii. 2 f.) and Elihu (xxxv. 5 ff.), Job believes that human sin does not affect God. It is only rebellion against His authority. God is unemotional, impassible, too high and exalted to have interest or pleasure in human conduct (vii. 20). The next verse, Marshall (p. 127) suggests, carries the idea that Job thought of forgiveness as a mere divine edict ; not a gift of grace conditioned by penitence, but an arbitrary proceeding. ' Could anything, to *our* moral sense, be more appalling ? '

(*c*) *Job's Hold on God and Struggles Towards the Light*

There was another side to Job's mind. In his earlier days, before calamity, bringing doubt and despair, had swept over his life, he had known all the sweetness and joy of fellowship with a gracious God. And now even in his present dark mood he could not altogether divest himself of his old feeling for Him. One easily discovers traces of higher and truer conceptions. In the heart of a truly devout man even such sorrows as his could not altogether destroy faith. It may be obscured, but at times it must break out. He did find it impossible to keep his foothold on the higher levels, and again and again was hurled back into the valley of desolation, yet there can be discerned stages in an upward movement of his soul towards assured trust in God.

The earliest indication is in the very first speech in reply to Eliphaz (vii. 7–8), when Job appeals to God : ' Oh, remember that my life is wind : mine eye shall see no more good,' and then thinks of Him as one who by and by will seek His servant in lovingkindness. It will be too late ; he will already have gone down to Sheol ; nevertheless, the thought that God will miss him, will desire to look upon him as in the happy days of old, proves that he has not lost all idea of a God of grace and pity. Almost immediately (verse 11) he speaks with the utmost bitterness of his treatment, yet

again at the end of his speech (vii. 21) dwells pathetically upon the same thought : 'For now shall I lie in the dust ; and Thou shalt seek me diligently, but I shall not be.' The God whom in the past he had known as one of love would seek to renew the old fellowship. Let Him pardon before it is too late ! His heart cries out for the Friend whom, contrary to all appearances, he feels to be pardoning love (vii. 8 is missing from the LXX, and is rejected by Driver-Gray, following Dillmann, Budde, Beer, &c.).

The first speech in reply to Bildad finds Job still defiant (ix. 15 ff.) ; God is unjust, multiplying wounds without cause, mocking at the trial of the innocent. But in ix. 32 f. is an utterance so pregnant with meaning as at once to send us to the New Testament. He says of God that He is purposed to make him guilty, innocent though he is. Then we have : 'Were He one like myself I would answer Him, we would come together in judgement. But there is between us no umpire, that can lay his hand upon us both.' One thinks of Robert Browning's Saul :

'Tis the weakness in strength that I cry for ! my flesh, that I seek
In the Godhead ! I seek and I find it. O Saul, it shall be
A Face like my face that receives thee ; a Man like to me,
Thou shalt love and be loved by, for ever ! a Hand like this hand
Shall throw open the gates of new life to thee ! See the Christ stand !

Oppressed by the thought of God as so aloof from human nature as to lose those qualities of sympathetic nearness which seemed to make Him real to faith, staggering under the conception of Him as an Autocrat capricious and arbitrary, unaccountable to any one, Job's heart cries out for a humanized God, One man-like in spirit and understanding, or for an umpire, a daysman who could enter into sympathy with both parties, God and man. He was altogether unconscious of it, but his cry does point forward to the Incarnation.

In the same speech Job pleads before God his own

creatureship: Why should He despise the work of His own hands? 'Thy hands have framed and fashioned me.' 'Thou hast granted me life and favour, and Thy visitation hath preserved my spirit' (x. 3, 8–12). The plea is that of quatrain lxii. in Fitzgerald's Omar Khayyám:

> Shall He that made the vessel in pure Love
> And Fancy, in an after Rage destroy?

Faith in a God of love will not allow itself to be altogether smothered. He had been kind and gracious, had lavished upon his making affectionate care and interest. But this recalling to mind of the divine benevolence, with its indication that something of the former trust in a God of love was still left to him, is only momentary. A terrible reaction follows (13 ff.). Such kindness was a sham, a devilish plot to gain his trust and lull him into a feeling of security, and hence only hid the malignant purpose now revealed to destroy him. Yet still the final appeal of this speech —that God would let him alone—(20 f.) shows that the old faith had not been completely lost.

In the first reply to Zophar are more traces of progress in right thinking. The three had spoken unrighteously for God; had, indeed, flattered and cringed before Him. And such conduct would draw upon them His wrath (xiii. 8–12). To him it was an omen of salvation that into His presence no godless man may come (xiii. 16). Sure that he will appear before God, he is convinced that he will be justified. After all, then, He is not indifferent to moral distinctions! He hates all sycophancy and meanness, and is the rewarder of innocence and the foe of wickedness. But xiii. 21 ff. finds Job down again in the depths, fascinated by the horrible picture of a torturing deity.

In xiii. 26 he makes a confession of youthful sins; and in xiv. 4, if the verse be not a gloss, he pleads his share in the universal liability to sin. But probably

Marshall (p. 137) goes too far in his view that 'the author of the poem certainly considers it a fault in Job that he was so unwilling to confess sinfulness in his maturer years,' and then in regarding the confession here as a stage in the patriarch's upward progress. For the whole poem is based upon, not Job's absolute sinlessness, but upon the fact that he had committed no sin sufficiently heinous to be regarded as a just cause for his dreadful sufferings.

The next mark of progress is in the same speech (xiv. 13–15). Job addresses God. Would that He might conceal him in Sheol until His wrath was spent! Then, wishful to renew the old friendly relations and sweet intercourse, He would summon His servant back to life. Sheol would prove a refuge provided by love until anger had changed to mercy, and from it he would gladly come forth when called. But, alas! a wish like that has no sure foundation. Would that it might be different! But from Sheol no man may return (16–22).

In the reply to the second speech of Eliphaz are to be found the famous passages in which the patriarch appeals from God to God (xvi. 18–21, xvii. 3). Fuller discussion must be reserved for the next section. It is enough for our present purpose to mark how Job turns from his false notions of a God hostile and malignant, One determined to hold him guilty, to One good and true, a veritable Witness in heaven who will eventually, after death, vindicate his integrity and maintain his right. Scorned by the three, he makes the great leap of faith from the unreal deity of his present distorted imaginings to the real One, the loving One of the happy past and the future (xvii. 9 should probably not be brought in here; it seems to be a misplaced part of the speech of Bildad [Driver-Gray, Peake, Duhm]).

In the second reply to Bildad, Job reaches the heights (xix. 25–7). This great utterance of faith will be considered in section (*e*). Here it is sufficient to mark

that, once again repelled by the unsympathetic attitude of the friends, there fills his heart the sublime confidence that after he is dead God Himself will vindicate his character, and that he himself shall see Him and know that he has been cleared of all charges of wickedness.

After the flight of faith in chapter xix. the reader expects progress unto even loftier certainties, but such an expectation is falsified. Yet, while the highest point had been reached in the second cycle, very fine later utterances are not altogether wanting. If only Job could come to the judgement-seat of God, surely He would give heed to him (xxiii. 3–6). In ix. 3, 14–20, 32 ff., xiii. 20–2 he had wished to meet God, but in his mind was the dread feeling that such a Judge would not really listen, but browbeat and overwhelm him with terrors, and so compel him to admit himself guilty. Now he knows that God will willingly receive him and magnanimously listen to his plea. 'To the old Hebrew attributes of God, Job is thus adding the new attribute of fairness, mildness, clemency, sweet reasonableness (what the Greeks call επιείκεια)' (Strahan, p. 206). In xxiii. 10, Job—if the right translation be 'when He hath tried me I shall come forth as gold' rather than 'If He tried me'—allows his faith—which cannot be completely smothered—in the righteousness of God to break through again, though only to be once more complaining a few lines later (xxiii. 15 ff.). In the final monologue (xxix.–xxxi.) is the fine thought that God is of such a character that He is the Friend of the slave, whose claims upon Him are as important as those of his owner. He made both, and will judge severely any injustice to him (xxxi. 13–15). But until the climax of the poem is reached in Job's happy confession after he had seen God: 'I had heard of Thee by the hearing of the ear; but now mine eye seeth Thee, wherefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes' (xlii. 5–6), on the whole, the high level of the great words of chapter xix. is not sustained. Indeed, in xxx. 20–4 he repeats the old

charges of the malignant cruelty of God. And in the last words of his soliloquy (xxxi. 35 ff.), proudly defiant, he demands that God shall write down the charges He makes against him. Conscious of his own integrity, the book in which these were written would he carry upon his shoulder or place it as a crown upon his head ; so sure was he that, coming into the presence of God, he would be justified. The very indictment he would wear as a badge of honour ! With this audacious word the human debate ends.

Yet it does seem to be a fact that after chapter xix. Job's sense of estrangement from God is not so sharp as before, even though he still wanders in the valley of doubt and perplexity. The personal problem, though it remains acute, seems to have somewhat yielded to the universal one of God's providence in general. Here he looks out on a world, as he had in chapter xii., which bears all the marks of divine misgovernment. No principles of righteous rule can be discovered. His own sad experiences seem to have opened his eyes to wrongs which in the days of his prosperity had been unnoticed. Possibly, too, the poet wished to express the thought that the sight of the divine misgovernment of the world compelled Job to descend from the high peak of the faith of chapter xix. Another motive may have been at work : Job is permitted first to win back his trust in God, and then once more to lose it so as to state and deal with the more universal problem. Peake (pp. 211 f.) asks the reason why, when Job had come to the conclusion that the enmity of God was only temporary, and had found the distinction within God [see (*d*)] to have mitigated the personal difficulty, this does not find expression when dealing with the wider question afterwards. He offers the opinion that the personal problem was felt far more keenly than the more general one. For the former he had far more data for its solution, and, besides, it was much more urgent than the other. On the general problem he states the case, but does not

feel it so necessary to seek a solution as he does for himself.

(d) God versus God

Some of the strangest utterances of Job are those in which he appeals from God to God[1] : 'O earth, cover not thou my blood, and let my cry have no resting-place. Even now, behold my witness is in heaven, and He that voucheth for me is on high. My friends are my scorners ; mine eye poureth out tears unto God ; that He would maintain the right of a man with God, and between a man and his neighbour' (xvi. 18–21). In xvii. 3 God is addressed : 'Lay down, I pray Thee, a pledge for me with Thyself ; who else is there that will strike hands with me ?' (cf. vii. 21). From one God, Job flies to the other. The One who is love will maintain his innocence before the Other. On the one side is God the giver of the pledge that Job will be vindicated, and on the other, God who receives it and releases him.

God is divided into two beings, as if He had a higher and a lower nature. The one is the deity of Job's present sad experiences, the One suggested by His external providences. He is a peculiarly malignant enemy, holding an innocent man guilty, an Almighty Spy relentlessly pursuing him, and hurrying him to destruction. His rule is the caprice and the pitiless force of an arbitrary Omnipotence which has obliterated moral distinctions and from which no redress is possible. The other God is the Friend of his earlier and happier years, His face now hidden, but in the future to be, as of old, a God of grace, truth, and love. This is the

[1] Cheyne (*Enc. Biblica*, p. 2472) fittingly compares Ibn Gabirol : 'I fly from Thee to Thee,' and Crashaw's :

> 'But Thou giv'st leave (Dread Lord !) that we
> Take shelter from Thyself in Thee.'

There is also the Koran : 'There is no refuge from God but unto Him' ; and Marcion's conception of the God of the Jews and the God of Jesus as distinct.

God Job's heart longs after, the One whom he cannot altogether forget in the time of his visitation. This One, merciful and kindly, knowing full well the patriarch's integrity, will one day completely vindicate him. This is the God of faith.

The first deity was, of course, unreal, an illusion of Job's distorted and morbid imaginings. He was a mere phantom, though thought of as real. To a God so conceived the man would not submit ; against Him the most wild and passionate outcries are made. The other was the real God—the God who had been, the God whom Job in his present pain could not altogether let slip, the God who would yet vouch for his righteousness. From the thought of the One he passes to the Other. All this means that Job's mind wavered between incompatible conceptions of deity, that in his thought there was a lack of harmony. The past experience of happiness and communion with God proved a God of grace. The present experience of agony of mind and body seemed to indicate the opposite—a God merciless and unrighteous. The gracious God of the past Job cannot forget, and ever and anon, even in the midst of the bitterest complaints, the feeling arises that God is other than He seems at present, and will be again kind, as of old.

We to-day would not have put it in the way our author did. We would have concluded that the bad God was non-existent ; for He failed to fit in with our moral conceptions. The Greek Diagoras of Melos blankly denied the existence of the gods because they failed to punish a flagrant injury received by him. Another Greek, Xenophanes, cast aside the deities of the popular faith because they failed in their conduct to satisfy his moral and religious ideals. But our poet was a true Jew, to whom real atheism was impossible. To him every event was immediately caused by God, and so each happening was an index of God's attitude towards him, and what seemed evil dealing was a proof of an unrighteous spirit. Since he was unable

to think of Him as both malignant and gracious, and as his experience apparently indicated both, he is driven to make two out of the one. Putting the matter in a way more consonant with our way of thinking, we should say that Job, in his supreme moments of faith, rose to the conception that, though his outward circumstances seemed to prove otherwise, the real God behind the present appearances was a Friend whose heart towards him was that of love. Strahan aptly quotes from Tennyson's ' Despair ' (xix.) :

> And yet—I have had some glimmer, at times, in my gloomiest woe,
> Of a God behind all—after all—the great God for aught that I know ;
> But the God of Love and of Hell together—they cannot be thought,
> If there be such a God, may the Great God curse him and bring him to naught !

Marshall (p. 141), almost alone of present-day scholars, finds in Job's thought here ' the first intimation, faint and obscure perhaps, but still there, of duality within the Godhead.' But this seems to be reading into the book an alien idea.

(*e*) *Job and the After-Life*[1]

In our book there is no doctrine of immortality in the fuller sense in which we use the term. Job shared with the others the ordinary view of Sheol as the dark, gloomy receptacle for the unsubstantial shades of all who had lived, whether good or bad, and from which place there was no return (iii. 13–18, vii. 9 f., x. 21 f., xi. 8, xiv. 7 ff., 21 f., xvi. 22, xvii. 13, 16, xxi. 26, xxvi. 5, xxx. 23, xxxviii. 17).

Nevertheless, as the poem progresses, the mind of Job can be seen moving towards a higher view ; he has the seed-thoughts from which sprang the nobler conception. In vii. 8, 21 he expresses the conviction

[1] Cf. *Commentaries* of Driver-Gray, Peake, Davidson ; Davidson's *Old Testament Theology*, pp. 466 ff.

that when he is dead, and gone beyond recall, God will want him, will seek him diligently in order to renew the old fellowship of love. But it will be too late. The very vehemence in which Job, here and elsewhere, denies the possibility of an after-life would almost lead the reader to think that he is suppressing a hope that one might be possible, a hope which once or twice does break the restraining barriers set by the popular belief he shared.

In xiv. 13–15 he passionately longs for a life after death.

O that Thou wouldst hide me in Sheol,
That Thou wouldst keep me secret, until Thy wrath be past ;
That Thou wouldst appoint me a set time, and remember me !
If a man die, shall he live [again] ?
All the days of my warfare would I wait,
Till my release should come.
Thou shouldst call ; and I would answer Thee ;
Thou wouldst yearn after the work of Thy hands.

Job had just emphatically denied the possibility of an after-life. Once man is dead, unlike a tree, which might possibly sprout again, there is no hope of revivification. Would that it might be different ! Would that he might be hidden safely in Sheol until the anger of God was no more ! Then by and by he would be called from his temporary place of sojourn by God, and, like a soldier, would proudly answer the summons and come forth to renewed fellowship with Him. But such a wish is but an illusion, a dream immediately dismissed (xiv. 18–22). The evidence of inexorable fact compels him to reject his hope as baseless. If it were only otherwise !

In xvi. 18–21 is another of those utterances of faith which knit our hearts to that of Job :

Even now, behold, my witness is in heaven,
And He that voucheth for me is on high.

He is confident that, after he is dead, God will vindicate him, see him righted. But Sheol is the place of no

return (xvi. 22). God will indeed vouch for his integrity. But as yet he cannot rise to the hope that he himself will be brought up out of Sheol to witness his vindication, or that, remaining in Sheol, he will be aware of God's act of justice and grace.

In xix. 25–7 high-water mark is reached. The Revised Version reads as follows :

> But I know that my redeemer liveth,
> And that He shall stand up at the last upon the earth :
> And after my skin hath been thus destroyed,
> Yet from my flesh I shall see God :
> Whom I shall see for myself,
> And mine eyes shall behold, and not another.
> My reins are consumed within me.

The passage is one of great difficulty for the interpreter. The main points only can be considered here. (*a*) 'From my flesh' may be rendered equally well 'without my flesh.' Several meanings are thus possible. (1) Job will still be alive, but his flesh has been so destroyed by his disease that he has become merely a skeleton. Or (2) he has died, and as a disembodied spirit will see God. Or (3) he shall see Him, not in his present flesh, but with his spirit clothed in a new spiritual body. If the translation should be 'from my flesh,' does it mean (4) 'away from,' 'from the standpoint of'—that is, in this present body of mine, made whole again during my lifetime? Or (5) after my skin has wasted away and I am reduced to a mass of flesh? Or (6) does 'from my flesh' refer to a resurrection body at the last day or earlier? Or does it mean (7) 'from' in the sense of 'within my flesh do I see these [words]'—that is, I alone am now conscious of all the sufferings I must endure? (Morris Jastrow). (*b*) The literal translation of the previous line is : 'And after my skin, they have destroyed this.' 'They have destroyed' is clearly here, as often in Hebrew, the idiomatic equivalent of our passive in contexts where human agency cannot be thought of

(cf. iv. 19, vii. 3 ; Prov. ix. 11 ; Ezek. xxxii. 25, &c.). But does ' after my skin ' mean (1) ' afterwards ' in the sense of ' some later time,' or, as some think ' at the last day ' ? Or (2) ' after the loss or destruction of my skin ' when I am dead ? Or (3) ' behind or under my skin ' while I am still alive ? Again, what is the significance of ' this ' ? (1) Did Job point to it, and thus it is equivalent to ' this skin of mine ' ? Or (2) shall we interpret, with one reading of the R.V. margin : ' And after my skin hath been destroyed, this [shall be] even from my flesh shall I see God ' ? Or (3) with the other marginal reading : ' And [though] after my skin this [body] be destroyed, yet from my flesh shall I see God ' ? Or (4) does it mean ' so, in this manner '—that is, thus destroyed ? (*c*) Is a distinction to be drawn between ' skin ' and ' flesh,' or do they mean the same ? (*d*) The verb in verse 26 is usually rendered ' hath been destroyed,' from a word meaning ' to strike away or off.' But the Vulgate rendering : ' Et rursum circumdabor pelle mea ' (' I shall again be surrounded by my skin,' i.e. in my resurrection body), shows that its maker thought of a similar word meaning ' to be surrounded.' (*e*) In verse 25, what is the meaning of the word *go'el* ? When referring to men, it is used of the next-of-kin acting in various capacities, such as redeemer or deliverer from servitude or debt, or even as an avenger of blood. As used of God, it refers to the protection of orphans, deliverance from death, exile, the Egyptian bondage, &c. Does it signify here (1) ' Avenger of blood,' the blood of the patriarch unjustly shed ? Or (2) ' Deliverer ' or ' Redeemer ' from the power of Sheol ? Or (3) ' Deliverer ' from affliction not due to wickedness ? Or (4) ' Vindicator ' of Job's rights, the clearer of his honour and character from undeserved wrong ? (*f*) In the next line should we translate : (1) ' He shall stand up,' i.e. rise up as one who intervenes in a lawsuit as witness or judge ? Or (2) ' Arise against dust,' i.e. as an assailant against the three friends ?

Or (3) do the renderings of the LXX version: '*ἐπὶ γῆς ἀναστήσαι* (*ἀναστήσει δέ*) *τὸ δερμα* (*σῶμα*) *μου* ('to raise up [He will raise up] upon the earth my skin [body]'), and the Vulgate version: 'De terra surrecturus sum' ('I am about to rise up from the earth'), witness to a different reading of the Hebrew text? (*g*) Should the next word be translated: (1) 'Later on,' 'in after time'? Or (2) 'at the last'? If it be not adverbial, is it (3) a noun, 'Afterman,' in the sense of avenger or second, as in a duel? Or is it adjectival, (4) 'One who comes after I am dead, as my successor'? Or (5) 'One who comes at the end and says the last word in the dispute'? Or (6) 'as the last,' He who survives all? (*h*) The next phrase is literally 'upon dust.' Is the meaning: (1) 'against dust,' i.e. the accusers of Job? Or (2) 'on behalf of dust,' i.e. Job about to become dust? Or (3) 'the dust' of the ground of Sheol? Or (4) 'upon the earth,' as opposed to heaven? Or (5) 'Above the earth,' i.e. in heaven? Or (6) 'upon my dust,' i.e. the dust which I am soon to be? Or (7) 'upon my grave,' i.e. the dust in which I shall soon be laid? (*i*) Should we render in verse 27 'for myself' or 'on my side,' i.e. is the emphasis upon Job's seeing God himself or his finding Him on his side? (*j*) What is the thought of the next line? (1) 'I and no other shall see God.' Or (2) 'I shall see God and not another.' But since the word 'another' means also 'stranger,' we can have (3) 'I and not a stranger shall see God,' i.e. 'The three shall not see Him, only I' (cf. 1). Also (4) 'I shall see God, and not as a stranger,' i.e. I shall behold God to be no longer estranged and hostile, but as a friend.[1]

The student thus finds himself in a veritable maze of diverse interpretations. The view of Chrysostom

[1] The difficulties in the interpretation of the Hebrew text as it stands are immense, and it is natural that many scholars have proposed emendations, a number of which the reader may find in the philological notes of the Driver-Gray *Commentary*.

and others of the Oriental Church amongst the Fathers, and Stickel, Hirzel, Budde, and E. Kautzsch among the more recent commentators, that in the passage is no reference to an after-life, but to a vindication which occurs before death, should be set aside. It can find some justification in certain interpretations of the text. It is further pointed out that Job did see God while still this side of Sheol (xlii. 5), and also that in words uttered later (xxi. 26, xxx. 23. xxvi. 5 f. is given to Bildad) the old view of Sheol is held. But, on the contrary, the declaration that his Vindicator lives indicates a contrast to the state of Job, who will die. In xvi. 18 f. also Job has in mind vindication after he is dead, and in such passages as vi. 8 ff., vii. 6, x. 20 f., xiii. 15 ?, xiv. 13 ff., 18–22, xvii. 10–16, he evidently cannot think of any earthly recovery ; rather must he die. Moreover, if Job expects that God will vindicate him here and now, even though the sequel shows that it actually happened, he stultifies his own words and ranges himself on the side of the views of the friends. Morris Jastrow's opinion that the *go'el* is a *human* redeemer has little to commend it.

On the other hand, we must not read into the words our New Testament notions of immortality and resurrection. The doctrine of an after-life is found in the LXX version in both xiv. 14 and the appendix to the book (xlii. 17). Further, its rendering of our passage was, by Clement of Rome, Origen, Cyril of Alexandria, &c., understood of the resurrection. This is clearly the meaning of the Vulgate Latin, and taken by many more recent commentators.[1] But there is no idea in the mind of the patriarch of a blessed *continued immortality of the soul*, embodied or otherwise. Had such an idea become a conviction with him, could it have been referred to so briefly and so altogether ignored in the rest of the book ? Whatever the hope was which was cherished in chapter xix., it did not

[1] The whole passage is taken by Siegfried as a later gloss referring to the resurrection of the good.

recur, it was held only for one supreme moment of faith.

The Hebrew text seems to mean simply this : *After he is dead* there will be given to Job by the good God of his faith, as against the cruel God of the present outward circumstances, a complete vindication, and he himself shall see Him and know that he has been cleared. From the text itself, if we adopt the more probable translation of verse 26, 'without my flesh,' we are unable to infer more than that Job is sure of seeing God after he is dead and his flesh destroyed. This seems to point to the state of a disembodied spirit ; to go further, and think of the spirit as being reclothed in a resurrection body, is a transgression of the laws of sound interpretation. Further, from the passage itself we cannot infer that such an experience of vindication and seeing God will be any more than temporary, one supreme moment of bliss ; that it will be continuously prolonged after the time of the vindication is not suggested.

But the importance of Job's words must not be minimized. Even though they do not teach immortality in our full and precise New Testament sense, they move in that direction. A great germinal truth is set forth that even after death the highest activities are possible. It is a great spiritual advance on the popular doctrine of the altogether shadowy and joyless existence in Sheol, even though nothing is said about deliverance from it. It is no wonder that Job is dazed, overwhelmed by the glorious vision his faith has anticipated, and is faint with longing to see it : 'My reins are consumed within me.'

Why was no use made of this great thought after chapter xix. ?[1] How is it that in xxx. 23 Job is back to his old conception of Sheol ? It is evident that our

[1] xxvii. 8 probably belongs to Zophar, and refers to recovery from sickness. If it means that the godless have no hope after death, implying the opposite for the righteous, then it is so inconsistent with the general standpoint of the book that Peake is probably right in regarding it as a later gloss.

great poet could not retain his foothold on these higher reaches. It would seem that he was not able to find full satisfaction in what he regarded as one solution of his problem. Just a wish, a passing aspiration, too beautiful to be true. And yet, though only a passing conviction of a vindication after death, it witnesses to the thought that even physical dissolution cannot annihilate contact with God, and, further, that a just God must, if not here, then after death, see that suffering innocence is righted.

(*f*) *Is Job a Personification of Israel?*

An older theory was that our book is an allegory (Warburton, Seinecke, &c.). The man Job is Israel, who speaks in him—either the people itself suffering in exile or Israel idealized. On the contrary, the sustained individual references throughout have compelled the majority of students (G. A. Barton, Peake, Gray, J. M. Powis Smith, Strahan, &c.), to set aside all such allegorical views ; Job is simply an individual, and all his struggles and perplexities are such as belong to the life of an individual. Some scholars (Cheyne,[1] Blake, &c.) see more than a merely personal reference : Job's problem was but part of a more general one—' that of man-soul.' Job's history is more than that of a particular man living in a certain place at a certain time, but a type of suffering righteousness, no matter where it may be found, either within Israel or without, ' wherever on the wide earth tears are shed or hearts are broken.' Others (A. B. Davidson, Delitzsch, S. R. Driver) think that while the author has in mind his own individual sorrows, and is revealing epochs in the growth of his own soul, yet his scope and sweep are much wider. He is not, indeed, personifying Israel ; nevertheless, in writing he is thinking not only of himself, but also of the suffering nation, or the pious section of it. His theme was suggested by national as well as personal calamities. Job is both an individual,

[1] Cf. *The Prophecies of Isaiah*, vol. ii., pp. 259 ff., *Job and Solomon*, p. 65.

stripped and afflicted, and also a sorrow-smitten Israel, and each must take courage in the final joyful issue and the explanations offered for the trials of the righteous.

(*g*) *The Book a Vindication of the Rights of the Individual Conscience*

There are elements of truth in all the views just mentioned ; for there are times (cf. Cheyne, op. cit.) when the words of Job seem to overpass the boundaries of one man's experience. Yet assuredly the individual problem predominates. And never before had the claims of the individual conscience been so triumphantly vindicated, and the independence and worth of the personal judgement so strongly asserted. With conscience assuring him of innocence he can assert its verdict in the face of the scepticism of his friends. Not only so, but, confident in the approval of this inner voice, he is unafraid to brave the God of the traditional belief, who had apparently, by His acts of providence, denied this. The disapproval of any other authority was outweighed by that inner self, not blind to plain facts, but urging only truth. Even Omnipotence does not destroy the validity of its verdict, or turn its yea into nay. Creed and traditional opinion must give way before the moral rights of the cultured religious personality. (Cf. section on ' The Teaching of the Epilogue.')

(5) The Teaching of the Prologue

Here information is given not known to Job himself ; for of the heavenly councils he is completely ignorant. Whether or not the author is using a popular story, this prose introduction evidently expresses his mind or he would have set it aside.

It is clear that the writer leads Job on as a blameless man, and yet a great sufferer. Hence suffering does not necessarily imply previous wickedness on the part of the man afflicted. By anticipation the three friends are confuted ; the reader is assured that they

are wrong. Another thought is, when man suffers, far from being angry or indifferent, and careless of his interests, God has not ceased to be gracious, though for the time His purposes are hidden. Human welfare is not alien from God. He may even permit his faithful servant to be sorely tried, but He is prompted by the highest motives. The views of Professor Morris Jastrow that the Satan episode was introduced into the old folk-tale in order to set forth the opinion that human affliction may be due to divine caprice, as also the further belief, similar to that of Luzzatto, that the God of the prologue is really not the Yahweh of Israel, gracious and kind, but a foreign deity, are somewhat superficial.

Next, suffering is a test of the disinterestedness of goodness. The Satan's charges are blunt enough: righteousness is to be expected in one with wealth and health. Separate them, strip Job of riches, children, and physical well-being, and piety will at once depart. His devotion to God is really for the sake of the reward, not due to sincere love towards Him. Even his love for his children is nothing so long as he is not afflicted in his own bone and flesh. Human nature is so constituted that a genuinely fine spirituality is impossible. It only seemed to exist because the patriarch's character had not been put to the proof. The prologue vindicates Job's devotion as sincere and disinterested. His religion was not refined selfishness, and dependent upon the sheltering circumstances of prosperity. His piety was not mercenary, but pure, revealing a character saturated with a pure ethical idealism triumphing over adverse circumstances.

Instead of being necessarily a manifestation of divine wrath for wrongdoing, one reason for affliction is that it may be a test of the sincerity of devotion. It proves before all that piety should not be identified with prudence and self-seeking. To be good when all goes well may mean little as to the reality of faith, but to hold on to God when He seems to fail is genuine

religion. To some great souls is given the great privilege of exhibiting to their fellows such fidelity. This is far from being, to our writer, the finest suggestion he can make on his problem ; for he never again refers to it. But it is one of no small value, even to our own generaton.

It is sometimes said (e.g. E. Kautzsch, Marshall) that Job suffered to vindicate God's honour, which had been impugned in the heavenly assemblies. There may be some truth in this, but the chief reason was to prove, against the cynical insinuations of the Satan, the divine assurance of the purity of his integrity. Nor, as Peake (p. 30) thinks, is the opinion of Marshall (pp. 92 ff.) and A. M. Fairbairn (*City of God*, pp. 162 ff.) tenable that one answer of the book to its problem is that affliction comes from the Devil ; for the Satan here is not a personality acting in independence of God, but only as His servant (cf. Satan section later). Nor, again, is there in the prologue any suggestion that Job suffered to discipline his character? He is regarded as already a good man and without blame. The purificatory nature of affliction is as yet ignored. Marshall (p. 94) sees in the prologue a germinal form of the doctrine of vicarious suffering. But this, as Peake and Strahan believe, is unlikely ; there is no thought of Job's affliction as atoning, such as we find in the Isaianic Servant of the Lord sections. It can only be regarded as sub-vicarious in that undeservedly he suffered for his fellow men in the sense that in him the purposes of God are made manifest for their welfare. But of the real redemptive meaning of the term there is not the faintest trace.

(6) The Meaning of the Epilogue

After the lofty heights of the speeches of Yahweh out of the storm, the epilogue may strike the reader as a great descent, an anti-climax. It seems a return to the old doctrine of reward discarded in the poem. If, in the end, Job received double possessions, then

piety and material prosperity are inseparably connected, after all. Are we not moving in the realm of vulgar compensations, and thus the prose ending comes very near to bathos ? It has been held that, since our author used part of an old folk-tale here, he had to leave the ending as he found it. It would have been too bold a defiance of the traditional story had he left Job a sufferer. But as, on this theory, the central portion has been discarded for a very different dialogue, the argument is not very cogent. For, if the ending had contradicted his own views, it is hardly likely he would have made use of it.

It can be shown that this section is not out of place, and, indeed, is not without its own distinctive contribution to the discussion of the problem. (*a*) The three friends were certainly wrong in their doctrine of the *invariable and inevitable* connexion of conduct with outward circumstances, but it was no part of the author's purpose to have denied that the *general tendency* of piety was to produce prosperity. (*b*) A New Testament writer would have brought in an assurance of immortality to redress the wrongs of the present life, but our writer had no sure foothold of faith in a future life, and so the restoration must be here and now. (*c*) By exponents of the Job = Israel theory it is held to be a necessary concession to the crowd that after the national (= Job) sufferings there should be a return to material prosperity. Could Israel be other than so blessed ; for had not the prophets promised double compensations, e.g. in Isa. lxi. 7 ; Zech. ix. 12 ; Jer. xvi. 14–18 ? (*d*) It cannot be said that the epilogue proves the Satan's taunt to be justified. Job never really renounced God. What he ever sought was the divine vindication of his character, that God would turn His seeming nay of disapproval to a yea of approval, and not for compensations for his afflictions in material prosperity. Not a return to his former condition of prosperity, but to regain the old fellowship with God, was the craving of his soul.

Further, the renewal of prosperity is not given to Job after any confession of such previous sin on his part as caused his pains, but after God's judgement that he had spoken concerning Him rightly, as the three had not. (*e*) Poetic justice demanded such an ending. From the first the reader held the clue to the meaning of the discussions, for he had the prologue before him. Since Job was blameless, God must make some amends for the permission given to the Satan, the reader's sense of fitness making it imperative that the divine character should be cleared of the charge of unfairness, or even worse. Besides, when the patriarch had been judged to have been in the right, and the accusation of the Satan falsified by the severest possible tests, was it fitting that he should continue to suffer?

Again (*f*), the rebuke of the friends and the approval of Job are very illuminating. The three were honest and sincere men endeavouring to justify the ways of God with men, and they said many fine things. Why then were they condemned? Because theirs was a cut-and-dried orthodoxy, shutting its eyes to the plain facts of human experience. Their theories about God were not true, hence they spoke falsely of Him. To flatter and magnify Him they were prepared to distort the truth; to bolster up their pet doctrine as to the inseparable connexion of sin and suffering, and, rather than admit any exceptions to it, they went so far as to invent sins for their friend. Misunderstanding the divine mind, they were yet so sure they knew it and had thoroughly grasped the significance of the attitude towards Job, that they were prepared to sacrifice his integrity. Such defenders displeased God.[1] As for Job, the God he had railed at, the deity of a passing imagination and of false theory, was, *if real*, deservedly

[1] Cf. Diogenes Laertius, *Lives of the Philosophers*, Epicurus, xxvii.: 'The impious man is not he who discards the gods believed in by the many, but he who applies to the gods such opinions as the many entertain.'

condemned. The man had indeed said many blameworthy things in the course of the debate, but it was due to ignorance of the kind of God He really was. He should have known better, and was justly rebuked, though allowance seems to have been made for his outbursts as the outpourings of a perplexed soul tortured and unstrung. But, after he has admitted his error in charging God with injustice, he is divinely justified in his reiterated denials that he suffered on account of sin. Call his affliction a mystery and he makes fitting submission, but deem it deserved retribution for wrongdoing and an outraged conscience will cry aloud its vehement protest. Let the heavens fall, he must follow to the end the judgement of his conscience !

It is just such a man who is loved by God. He holds him to be in the right against the three. Far better the honest recognition of difficulties for faith than the unthinking acceptance of an orthodoxy which cannot be squared with facts. God is on the side of the sincere thinker. He is not angry when souls revolt against common but crude and one-sided views of His nature and character. He may find it needful to rebuke unjust accusations of cruelty or neglect on His part, yet such wild cries, forced from the lips of a soul painfully struggling to the light, were proofs, not of contumacious wickedness, but of ignorance of His true character. God prefers one who defiantly rebels against false conceptions of Him to those who think to do Him service by holding to notions of a popular theology out of touch with reality.

(7) The Significance of the Speech(es?) of Yahweh

Job had often expressed a wish that God would answer him, but, when He does appear, there is no discussion of his problem, nor a word about his guilt or innocence. Rather he is overwhelmed by a revelation of Yahweh's work as Creator, Life-Giver, and Sustainer, and rendered intensely conscious of his own

puniness and ignorance. He is rebuked (xxxviii. 2, xl. 2) ; he had darkened counsel by words without knowledge, had contended with God and maintained there was no moral order in the universe.

Note that the patriarch is not blamed for the same matters in which he is praised in the epilogue. There he was held to be in the right in maintaining his innocence of such sin as deserved his sufferings as punishment, and for upholding the true view of God against that of the friends. Indeed, as often pointed out, the silence of the speech as to the correctness of the insinuations of the Satan and the charges of the three tacitly confirms the verdict of Job's own heart that he was free from moral offence. The charge now is that of irreverence *after* his calamity had struck him, his foolish and presumptuous criticism of the divine ways, in ignorance of their real meaning. For this he is deservedly rebuked. This last statement has been challenged. To some the speech seems very cruel : 'A more unethical address was never ascribed to a holy God' ; Job's mouth is stopped 'with an unparalleled brutality' and 'a devilish scorn.' This is surely extreme. Irony there is, sharp and biting. The address is not without a certain roughness and mockery. But there is no intention to crush and annihilate Job's spirit. Grave remonstrance rather than severe judgement sums up the tendency of the words. The irony exhibited was that of love, and was perfectly fitting. The man needed a sharp lesson to bring him to the proper attitude of humility ; for such harsh thoughts of a cruel God as he had cherished could not but seriously impair, and in the end destroy, the religious spirit, if they became fixed convictions.

It cannot be said that Job needed to be made aware of the omnipotent creatorship and almighty wisdom of God as revealed in nature (cf. ix. 4–10, xii. 7–20). In ix. 3, 14 ff., 34 ff., and xiii. 20 ff., Job anticipates what actually happened—he would be overwhelmed with the divine majesty and confronted with questions

he could not answer. But this knowledge had been intellectual, theoretical, even second-hand and traditional, and hence not of the right kind. The greatness and the power of God had to be brought home to him so directly and intimately that his whole being would be flooded with the sense of it. Moreover, the speeches are far more than an exhibition of sheer crushing almightiness, as anticipated in chapter ix., for Job was led to see that behind the power was a loving purpose and care.

> I see the whole design ;
> I, who saw power, see now love perfect too :
> Perfect I call Thy plan ;
> Thanks that I was a man !
> Maker, remake, complete—I trust what Thou shalt do !
> (R. Browning, ' Rabbi Ben Ezra,' x.)

The right temper of mind returns (xl. 3–5, xlii. 1–3, 5–6). Devout and trustful humility, the sure index of a true religious spirit, takes the place of presumptuous ignorance. He had spoken beyond his knowledge, which had been only that of hearsay ; now he had seen God, and, with a heart in which the bliss of a mystic vision blends with the painful memories of great unwisdom, he repents in dust and ashes.

Fuller discussion is necessary of two or three points. (*a*) Job is convicted of ignorance and weakness. Before him God unfolds a magnificent panorama of animated and inanimate creation, a marvellous revelation of infinite power and unsearchable wisdom. A series of ironical questions about nature confounds him. Not one can he answer. He discovers that he who had so boldly impugned the divine ways really knew nothing at all about them. How dare a creature so ignorant and frail indict the righteousness of a God so great ! Should so puny an intelligence presumptuously assume an understanding of a plan too vast for human comprehension ? If, then, the divine ways in nature are incomprehensible, are His providential dealings with

man any less mysterious, and is the divine character rightly blamed? Further, had he not been obsessed by the seeming evils of life? Was not the good, to which his attention is now turned, just as much, if not more, a mystery than evil? Moreover, the further observation must be made that mystery, the humbling sense of the infinitude of God, begets the adoration without which true and deep religious devotion is impossible. A fine religious worship dies in the presence of a God whose mind seems to be comprehended fully.

(*b*) Nor is this all. Some few students think that the only meaning of the address is that the problem of Job is an insoluble mystery before which one must bow in reverence. There is no solution; a cloud of thick darkness covers all. This view is not to be accepted. The vision does provide a solution—not, to be sure, intellectual and speculative, yet one none the less real; for healing is poured over the wounded spirit of Job. The God revealed in the speech is not bare Omnipotence. Nature is benevolent; its Lord cares most tenderly for beasts great and small (cf. xxxviii. 39 ff.). Everywhere the world reveals a loving Presence. Let the sufferer draw the inference that the God whose order of nature is instinct with affectionate care, who thinks of the needs of the living things He has so wonderfully fashioned, has not put him outside the bounds of His loving attention. Affliction is not purposeless when God is so great in grace as well as power. He cannot be hostile or neglectful. Looking away from himself to the wider world, Job finds the answer to the deepest cravings of his heart, and peace descends upon the stricken man.

(*c*) In some parts of the Old Testament there is an anthropocentric conception of the world. It is simply the arena for human history (cf. Gen. i. 26, ii. 4 ff.; Ps. viii., &c.). The early prophets, too, in their fight against the sensual nature-worship of Baalism, drove a wedge between man and nature. Such Psalms as xix., xxix., xxxiii., and civ. form a wholesome corrective.

Nature is not merely the stage on which man plays his noble or ignoble part.[1] So also to the author of Job it is far more than the setting for human affairs. In itself it is significant of the purposes of its Creator, expressive of His mind. Man is not so important as he thinks. The world was not made for man alone, nor is he the universe, the one object of the divine regard. Even where no human being is, in the thirsty wilderness God gives the refreshing rain (xxxviii. 26). Job had been too much engrossed with himself and his human fellows. Let him expand his outlook, turning away to the wider universe. 'Man is but a part of nature . . . no problem affecting man's relations can ultimately be solved without regard to the whole plan, the nature of things' (N. Schmidt).

(*d*) The vision of God brought peace to Job. Before, he had demanded to know everything; now he is willing to trust Him, to stay his mind on Him. No answer had come to his questionings; his sufferings are still unexplained—for he knows nothing of the events of the prologue—but he now casts himself on God with perfect confidence. It is not that he lies bludgeoned and stunned on the ground. A happy man, he is content with God, to whom he is reunited in a fellowship sweeter than ever. All misgivings as to the divine goodness have disappeared. He knows that every event of his life is part of a gracious purpose. We are reminded of the thought given such fine expression in the dramas of Sophocles and the lines of his fellow Greeks, Heraclitus and Cleanthes. Undeserved pain is permitted as part of a righteous and eternal harmony of things. What may appear to be a blot is not so; for suffering contributes to the perfection of that wider plan in which God is 'accomplishing all things with a view to the harmony of the whole' (Heraclitus). What to us seems discord is not so to Him, to whom good and evil blend into one harmonious purpose. Job, however, was no

[1] Cf. *The Psalter*, chapter i., by A. C. Welch.

philosopher with an intellectual solution, but he has come to see that God is one in whom he may trust, and to whom even his pains are part of a lovely purpose. Thus to him has come that most wonderful of all solutions to his problem—the mystic one. He trusts God even though he seemed to have had good grounds for mistrusting Him. It was a great audacity to introduce God in the poem, but a soul like that of the poet evidently felt it was the only way of setting forth the deepest teaching of the book. All other views expressed might be true enough in themselves, but neither singly nor collectively were they big enough to cover the whole facts of the problem. Let man trust God, and rise above his perplexities on the wings of faith. What a witness is the poet's rest in a mystical and sacramental apprehension of God to the grip his soul had on fellowship with Him! 'Under the flow of this fuller sense of God, perplexities disappear, just as rocks that raise an angry surf when the tide is low are covered and unknown when it is full' (A. B. Davidson).

It must be admitted that at first the words of the Almighty disappoint us. We would have preferred Job's questions to have been answered. Certainly the speech would not satisfy any other than a truly religious mind; for only such would have faith enough to cease from demanding an explanation of the apparent moral anomalies of Providence. Probably the author had no positive and intellectual answer to offer which would meet *all the elements of the problem*, otherwise he would have propounded it.

Yet here is a real solution, religious if not speculative, given not to the understanding but moving in the realm of faith. Job sees God, who Himself becomes the solution, satisfying the yearning soul and healing the bruised and broken heart. A vision of God, immediate contact with Him, and in the spirit of the sorely stricken man a rest-giving miracle is instantly wrought. Where you cannot fully understand God's

ways you can trust Him. That is the highest word of our poem.[1] One who comes face to face with God realizes the unwisdom of questioning His goodness. 'In the teaching of the Jewish Sages, personal religious experience was not only the beginning of wisdom, but its climax' (C. F. Kent).

(8) The Teaching of the Wisdom Chapter

The meaning of this beautiful chapter xxviii. is that Wisdom cannot be found. No human skill or endeavour can penetrate to it, though no earthly treasures are so hidden as to fail to be uncovered by industry and persistence. No wealth is precious enough to buy it. God only knows where it is. He alone discovered and possesses it, knows its nature, and by it had made the universe. Whether it is conceived as having received its existence before or at the creation is not clear, and some scholars think verses 26 f. mean that God first of all projected and visualized it as a wonderful idea and model, and then realized and tested it in the things He made (Driver, Duhm, Strahan, N. Schmidt, &c.). It is taught that man must bow before the unsearchableness of the divine Wisdom. There is no allusion to Job's problem. Evidently it is thought that all speculation as to the mystery of things is wrong. A later writer added the section to indicate the futility of the whole discussion. The problem is insoluble. A reverent agnosticism is man's right attitude. Only God can know. (Cf. v. 13, xii. 2, 13, xv. 8, xxxvii. 24, for depreciation of human wisdom.)

What is this Wisdom? It is the Reason pervading, underlying, and working within the order in all natural phenomena. To possess it is to grasp intellectually the divine principles by which the activities of the physical world and the happenings of human life are controlled. Man cannot attain it. Wisdom is conceived as having almost, if not quite, an objective

[1] Cf. Otto, *The Idea of the Holy*, pp. 80–3, English trans.

existence distinct from God ; in fact, the personification, or even the hypostatization, is similar to that of Prov. viii., and, some have thought, even more fully developed. It, however, differs from the conception of Proverbs in that it is not regarded as attainable by men. Note should be made of the earlier passage, xv. 7–8 : 'Art thou the first man that was born? Or wast thou brought forth before the hills? Hast thou heard the secret counsel of God?' Probably we should see here a reference, alone in the Old Testament, to the idea of a primaeval man older than creation ; or, bringing it into connexion with Prov. viii., find an allusion to personified Wisdom. In Job xxviii., as in Prov. viii., many find clear traces of the influence of Greek ideas.

Verse 28 is generally thought to be a later addition to the chapter : 'Behold the fear of the Lord, that is wisdom, and to depart from evil is understanding.' The wisdom is of a different kind from that of the rest of the chapter. There it is intellectual, the understanding of the principles underlying the whole order of the universe. Here it is an ethical and religious quality : homely piety and practical religion rather than speculative, and something attainable by man—the fear of the Lord and departing from evil. Either the verse is a later addition or it must be connected in some such way as this : God's wisdom, absolute knowledge of the laws of the universe, is not possible for man ; the only wisdom he may have is the fear of God and avoiding evil—the wisdom expounded in the religion of Israel. Such practical wisdom applied to his conduct is the substitute which God has decreed as the wisdom which befits his state.

(9) Some Other Points in the Theological and Ethical Teaching

(*a*) The Advanced Monotheism requires only the briefest mention, as every section of the book implies it. It is taken for granted that even non-Israelites

accept the uniqueness of God. Idolatry and heathen deities are practically ignored. The Satan acts only by His permission. He is the inscrutable, all-wise, benevolent, omnipotent Creator and Controller of all animate and inanimate nature (i. 6, xxxi. 26–8, xxxviii. 1 f.).

(*b*) The Angelology. The angelology is post-Exilic and late, its affinities being with literature after the return from Exile. God is surrounded by certain beings named 'sons of God' (i. 6, ii. 1), among whom the Satan seems to have been included. They come before Him at stated times, and form His council (xv. 8). In xxxviii. 7 they seem to be regarded as older than creation, being associated with the morning stars who sang together when the earth was founded. The name 'sons of God' must not be interpreted to mean 'begotten of God' in a physical sense, or 'servants of God.' Literally 'sons of the Elohim,' the meaning is that just as 'sons of men' possess the human nature, so these in contrast are of the higher Elohim nature, supernatural beings. While God is 'Elohim,' there is no thought of the angels as sharing His moral or spiritual nature. Though called 'holy ones' (v. 1, xv. 15), their holiness is not ethical, as if they were morally perfect; rather the term refers to their heavenly association with God, and as His ministers. Compared with God they are imperfect, and subject to folly and sin (iv. 18, xv. 15; cf. xxv. 5), though far higher than man (iv. 19). There is no distinction so far between good and bad angels. These passages contain no implication of a fall or rebellion against God. The sparks flying upwards of v. 7 have sometimes been interpreted of angels: man is doomed to trouble, but the angels soar high above all the troubles of earthly life (cf. Peake, in loc.).

In v. 1 is the thought of angels as intermediaries and intercessors for men. In the Elihu section the angelology is more developed (cf. p. 144). A thousand of them (or, many thousands?) act as mediators,

interpreting to man the reason of his afflictions, leading to repentance, and rescuing from the angels of destruction (xxxiii. 22 ff.). In later theology these 'slayers,' or angels of death, are often mentioned, but in the Old Testament this is the only reference, although in 2 Sam. xxiv. 16 f. ; 2 Kings xix. 35 ; 1 Chron. xxi. 15 f. ; 2 Chron. xxxii. 21 ; Isa. xxxvii. 36 ; Ps. lxxviii. 49, there are allusions to angels of the pestilence.

(*c*) The Satan. Marshall (92 f.) sees in the Satan conception of the prologue an incipient dualism : Satan is the instigator of evil ; affliction is from the Devil. But, while this is so in the later passage found in 1 Chron. xxi. 1, where Satan is a proper name (the article not being used) for an evil spirit actively hostile to God, and instigating man against Him, in Job and the earlier passage, Zech. iii. 1 ff. (the word has the article), it is not yet a proper name, but simply = the Adversary. In our book the Satan is clearly one of the servants of God, like the angels, and not opposed to Him. The name indicates his special function, which is that of opposing man's claims to goodness. He is a kind of prosecuting attorney, acting only with the divine permission, the agent of God sifting and testing human conduct and bringing sin to the light. Far from being an independent spirit of evil, and antagonistic to God, he is absolutely subordinated to Him.

Nevertheless, the germs of the later conception of an evil tempter and personal malevolence are present here. He is somewhat separated from the other angels in that while they are sent on their respective duties he has freedom to go where he wills, and thus to act upon his own initiative ; for God asks him where he has been (i. 7, ii. 2). It is God who calls attention to Job (i. 8), but it is at the Satan's instigation that calamity falls upon him. Evidently the patriarch's integrity was a source of irritation. In the exercise of his duties he had become cynical as to the reality of human goodness. Apparently he took a keen delight in his work, and a strain of malice appears in its

execution. It is not hard to understand how in later times he became thought of as definitely antagonistic to God, and the tempter of men to wrongdoing.

(*d*) MAN : SIN. The foregoing expositions will have brought out the main facts. On the emphasis laid upon the rights of the individual human conscience see again (4) (*g*). The moral dignity of his personality, loyalty to the verdict of his inner self—upon this Job takes his stand. There is nothing like it in all other ancient literature. And man's body is the noble product of the loving workmanship of God Himself (x. 8 ff.). On the other hand, vivid expression is given to the frailty of human nature ; its meanness, the brevity of life, its fullness of sorrow and unrest, its constant struggle with hardships, its ignorance, and its end in dismal Sheol (iv. 19 ff., v. 7, vii. 1–3, viii. 9, xiv. 1 f.[1] ; cf. also the section on the Teaching of the Speeches of Yahweh). The doctrine of the pre-existence of souls has been sometimes wrongly inferred from i. 21 : 'Naked came I out of my mother's womb, and naked shall I return thither.' This is to make 'I' identical with the soul, and 'thither' to be either the mother's womb as the abode of the soul, or the womb of mother earth, Sheol, regarded as the previous dwelling-place of the soul. The probable reference is to the similarity between the unsubstantial nature of the existence before birth and after death. Pre-existence has to be imported, and seems contradicted by x. 8 ff.

Ample recognition is given to sin as universally inherent in man. Human nature is morally as well as physically frail ; it is abominable and corrupt. And Job himself is not slow to admit his share in a common uncleanness (iv. 17 f., vii. 20, xiv. 4, xv. 14–16, xxv. 4–6 ; cf. ix. 2, x. 6, and xiv. 16 f.). There is, however, no belief in the sinfulness of the flesh. As will be seen in the next section, the inwardness of sin is deeply felt. Irreverent speech (i. 22, ii. 10, xlii. 7)

[1] S. Langdon, *Babylonian Wisdom*, p. 20, thinks that 'Man that is born of a woman,' &c., is a reflection of Babylonian doctrine.

against God is specially sinful in the prose section. On some wrong conceptions of God's attitude to sin see (4) (*b*).

(*e*) THE ETHICAL TEACHING. The previous discussions show that answers are given to certain fundamental questions of ethics. The briefest reference will here suffice. Conscience is supreme ; the inner consciousness of right must not be set aside by the voice of traditional authority. Utilitarian views are discarded ; righteous conduct is not commended for the reward it may bring. The fear of God is genuine only when free from all suspicion of expediency and self-interest. Material prosperity is not the *summum bonum* ; a purified character is, and a reason for affliction is the divine intention to make man better than what he was.

Righteousness in our book is thoroughly ethical. The good man follows the will of God and separates himself from all that is abhorrent to Him whose character is supremely righteous (i. 1, 8).

The ideals of Job remind us of those commended by Jesus in the Sermon on the Mount. Though certainly there is no command to love our enemies, yet the ethic, as so often it has been insisted, touches high-water mark as far as the Old Testament is concerned ; for it transcends that of the Decalogue, and even the teaching of the prophets. Chapter xxxi. is truly evangelical in its moral consciousness.

Sins of the heart are as clearly recognized as those of the deed. Irreverent thoughts towards God not expressed in outward blasphemy on the part of his children trouble the fatherly heart of Job (i. 5). He has made a covenant with his eyes not to go so far as even to look with lustful longing upon a maid (xxxi. 1–4).[1] Falsehood, deceit, and hypocrisy are repudiated

[1] Cf., however, Driver-Gray, in loc. : 'The comparison with Matt. v. 28 is interesting, but the ethical judgement is not quite the same, for here the look is avoided, not as being in itself sinful, but as liable to lead on to outward conduct . . . and therefore to the punishment of sin.'

(xxxi. 5–6, 33 f.), as also covetousness of the property of another, and gain by fraud and unjust dealing (xxxi. 7–8, 39 f.). Never had he committed adultery. Such would have been a heinous crime (xxxi. 9–12). But here we see that Job is not freed from the conceptions of his age; for, as Duhm points out, the next words, 'Then let my wife grind for another, and let others bow down upon her,' do not satisfy our own ethical sense. It could be only in an age when the wife was held but a chattel that it was possible for a man like Job to think of her bearing the punishment for any sin on his own part.

A very high ideal, even for Israel, is expressed in xxxi. 13–15. Never had the patriarch treated his slaves unjustly. When they had anything to urge against him, since they had rights as well as he, he could not, even though master, disregard them. Were they not his fellow creatures, made in the same way by the same God? And must he not act as one who would give account to Him of his actions toward them?

Job had not rejoiced at the ruin of his enemy (xxxi. 29; contrast viii. 22 and xxvii. 7, Bildad and Zophar), nor by a curse sought to bring destruction down upon him (xxxi. 30). Wealth had never been joyfully idolized (xxxi. 25). Nor had his heart ever been inclined to false gods; idolatrous thoughts were lies against the one true God (xxxi. 26–8).

While the author of Job sees nothing radically wrong in a social system in which exist the extremes of wealth and poverty (and how could we expect this at that time?), and regards such as perfectly natural, there is no doubt as to the reality and depth of his kindness to the poor and needy. In Zophar (xx. 19), Eliphaz (xxii. 6), as well as in Job (xxiv. 2–4, 9, xxxi. 21 f.), harsh treatment and oppression of the widow and orphan, the poor and helpless, are strongly condemned. The proof of genuine righteousness is tender sympathy and practical philanthropy by assisting them and defending them against the attacks of the unrighteous.

To fail them is wickedness (xxix. 12–17, 25, xxii. 7–9, xxxi. 16 ff., xxxi. 31 f.). But the poor have the right to justice even more than to philanthropy. God hath made them as well as the rich, nor does he have respect to the latter more than the former (xxxiv. 19).

(10) Job and the New Testament

Little use of our book was made by the New Testament writers. James (v. 11) reminds his hearers of 'the patience of Job.' In 1 Cor. iii. 19, 'He that taketh the wise in their own craftiness' is from v. 13. Rom. xi. 35—'Who hath first given to him and it shall be recompensed unto him again?'—refers back to xli. 11. These two quotations from Job are the only ones in which the Apostle Paul definitely rejects the Greek LXX and uses either the Hebrew original or some other Greek version. Phil. i. 19*a*, however—'This shall turn to my salvation'—is word for word identical with the LXX of xiii. 16*a*. The only possible use by Jesus is in Mark x. 27, where xlii. 2 may have been in mind; but this is extremely doubtful.

Job has sometimes been regarded as a direct and purposed type of Christ, but this notion of the mediaeval Church is impossible. Nevertheless, our book, like all others of the Old Testament, is part of a preparatory revelation. In so far as the patriarch is a perfectly good man, smitten of God by dreadful sufferings, sorrowful and despised of men, enduring afflictions not for his own sake, he may be regarded as prophetic of Christ and a foreshadowing of Calvary. His wistful longing for a blessed immortality points forward to its fulfilment in the New Testament, and it is not unfitting that our burial service, with all its jubilant resurrection hope, should repeat his 'Man that is born of a woman hath but a short time to live, and is full of trouble,' side by side with the glorious certainties of Paul in 1 Cor. xv. Moreover, while no intellectual and speculative solution of the problem of his undeserved sufferings is given to Job, he yet, in finding God as he

had never known Him before, wins the way to assured peace and rest of heart. The road is opened towards Bethlehem and Calvary.[1] With a triumphant certainty we are sure, in spite of all apparent contradictions of agonizing external circumstances, that God is Fatherly, Holy Love ; for we see Him self-revealed in Jesus : 'He that hath seen Me hath seen the Father' (John xiv. 9).

[1] Cf. Otto, op. cit., p. 177.

NOTE ON THE OLD TESTAMENT PROBLEM OF INNOCENT SUFFERING

THE student may find helpful the following very brief summary of the Old Testament attitude apart from the Book of Job.

(*a*) No real problem exists. All is perfectly straightforward. There is no undeserved affliction or prosperity. Goodness and badness sooner or later always receive their fitting reward or punishment in this life (Deut. xii. 28 ; Prov. xii. 21, xiii. 21 ; Ps. i., &c.). So Ezekiel, even though circumstances compelled him to discuss the problem for the sake of others. (*b*) Affliction is not merely a punishment for sin ; it may be purgative, a disciplinary chastisement sent by divine love to lead to righteous ways of conduct (Prov. iii. 11 ff. ; Amos iv. 8 ff. ; Hos. iii. 5 ; Jer. xv. 19–21, &c.). (*c*) No solution possible. Life is a painful mystery. God is not good, and, as far as man can see, there appears to be no moral order in His government of the world (Ecclesiastes). (*d*) Apparent anomalies in the divine ways are only temporary. The sufferings of the righteous will soon be over. Goodness will triumph ; the prosperity of the wicked cannot last ; the righteous shall endure by their fidelity. Be patient ; wait and see (Hab. i., ii. ; Mal. ii., iii. ; Ps. xxxvii.). (*e*) Suffering does not necessarily imply the wrath of God. It may be a way of service and preparation for it. Far from being inconsistent with fellowship with God, it led to the discovery of Him and a richer experience of His companionship (Jer. xii. 1–6, xv. 19 ff., &c.). (*f*) Affliction may be due, not to personal wrong-doing, but by reason of the wickedness of parents, ancestors, and others (Exod. xx. 5 ; Deut. v. 9 ; 2 Kings xxi. 11–15, xxiv. 3–4 ; Jer. xxxi. 29 ; Ezek. xviii. 2 ; Ps. lxxix. 8). (*g*) This last popular belief is strongly repudiated by Ezekiel in chapters xiv. and xviii. (cf. Jer. xxxi. 29 f.). Neither guilt nor merit can be transferred to another. Each man is held accountable for his own doings only, not for those of some one else. Suffering or prosperity is an infallible index to personal character. (*h*) It may be sent for larger purposes than the interests of the afflicted individual. This is illustrated in the stories of Joseph and Hosea. (*i*) It may be due, not to sin, but a martyrdom in loyalty to God and a divine mission (Ps. xliv. 22 ; Isa. l. 5–9). (*j*) Suffering may be endured in the place of others, a means of healing for others, vicarious and redemptive (Isa. liii.). (*k*) One must not forget the implications

of Hos. xi. 1–4 that in the sufferings of man God shares ; and one cannot help but quote George Adam Smith's remark on Jer. xiv. 8, 9 : ' A singular prayer of his which is tense with the instinct that God would surely be to Israel what Jeremiah had resolved and striven to be—not a far-off God who occasionally visited or passed through His people, but One in their midst, sharing their pain ; not indifferent, as he fears in another place (xiv. 21), to the shame that is upon them, but bearing even this ' (*Jeremiah*, p. 348). (*l*) There will be in a future-life reparation and compensation for the present afflictions (Isa. xxvi. 19 ; Dan. xii. 2 ; Pss. xlix., lxxiii.).

For those who wish to compare the ancient Greek views of suffering, an excellent summary is found in *The Vitality of Platonism*, by James Adam. On the Babylonian conceptions see S. Langdon : *Babylonian Wisdom*, and, for the views held by the Jewish rabbis, A Marmorstein's *The Old Rabbinic Ideas of God*, vol. i., pp. 181 ff.

Chapter VI

THE SONG OF SONGS

A.—INTRODUCTION

I. Title, &c.

The *Song* is in the third division of the Hebrew Canon, known as the Hagiographa (= the Writings). Within this section are the five 'Megilloth,' or 'Rolls,' so named because appointed to be read liturgically at the great annual feasts. They are the Song, Ruth, Lamentations, Ecclesiastes, and Esther, and our book was read on the eighth day of the Passover. The order of the Rolls varies. Our printed Hebrew Bible gives the order: the Song, Ruth, Lamentations, Ecclesiastes, Esther. The Talmudic and Massoretic traditions are somewhat different.

The title (i. 1) is a later addition to the original work: 'The Song of songs, which is Solomon's.' For, while in the rest of the book the prefix 'sh' is used for the relative pronoun, here the ordinary form 'ăshĕr' is found. Another common name is 'Canticles,' first used, according to the *Oxford English Dictionary*, in 1526, from the plural of the Latin *canticulum*. The Hebrew may mean that it is a song about Solomon, but most probably it is an assertion that he is the author. 'Song of songs' is a periphrasis for the superlative, like 'slave of slaves' (= the lowest slave; Gen. ix. 25), 'holy of holies' (= the most holy place; Exod. xxvi. 33), 'vanity of vanities' (= absolute vanity; Eccles. i. 2). Thus the title means either that, of all the songs of Solomon, this is the most beautiful and precious, or that this song of Solomon's is regarded as the finest of all songs in the world.

Most recent scholars do not include the book in the Wisdom literature, mainly because of the growing acceptance of it as an anthology of love-lyrics. But the present writer agrees with J. M. Powis Smith (*Hastings's Single Vol. D. B.* 975) that, no matter what theory of interpretation is accepted, the book illustrates the humanity of the Sages, dealing, as it does, with the subject of love. It should also be said that of late the opinions of Meek and G. Kuhn (see later) that from the very first it was a religious book strengthen the preference for the old classification, as does also the fact that the attachment of the name of Solomon connects it with Proverbs and Ecclesiastes. The Syriac version actually names it, 'Wisdom of Wisdoms, which is Solomon's.'

II. Interpretations of the Song

Few biblical books are as perplexing as this to the interpreter. Is it a drama, or an allegory, or a collection of love-songs, or an Adonis litany? The facts from which the student must start are these: Love is the theme; changes of number, and the use of masculine and feminine pronouns in the Hebrew, show that several different people speak or are spoken to in various parts of the book; dialogue and monologue are both present; the 'daughters of Jerusalem' suggest a sort of chorus; a real, though often unduly exaggerated, unity is apparent throughout.

(A) The Dramatic Theories[1]

(*a*) *Two Main Characters*

The traditional view is that of two main characters in the poem—Solomon and the Shulamite. The latter is a country maiden, wooed by the king in the guise

[1] For the history of the earlier theories see Zöckler, in Lange's *Commentaries*. More briefly in Delitzsch and N. Schmidt's *The Messages of the Poets*. The views of Reuss and Gratz that there is but one speaker throughout—Solomon or the Shulamite—have won no acceptance.

of a shepherd. Taken away from her home to Jerusalem, she becomes his bride and queen. The dialogue is that of lovers expressing love and admiration each for the other. According to Delitzsch, the most important exponent of this type of view, the Song is 'not properly an idyll, yet not properly a drama,' but rather 'a dramatic pastoral' in six[1] acts, each containing two scenes, celebrating primarily human love. A good analysis can be seen in Driver's Introduction.

This theory has so many objections that it is almost universally set aside, though it must be noted that Meek's Adonis-litany exposition (to be mentioned later) marks a return to a form of it—one pair of lovers only. The main criticisms of Delitzsch are such as these: Would a maid so self-respecting as the Shulamite, and so great an idealist as to the exclusive nature of love (cf. viii. 6 f.), have been willing to become one of many women in a harem? Are the noble expressions of love consistent with the voluptuary revealed in the reference to the many queens, concubines, and virgins of vi. 8? Is it possible for a man of such a sensual type to have been raised, as the theory suggests, above the licentiousness of polygamy to the pure monogamic affection by the beauty of the girl? And is it possible that the king, without a hint of the reason being given, would be represented as abandoning a palace for a rustic cottage, and as appearing disguised as a peasant? For these reasons, among others, the two-character theory of Delitzsch is now discredited.

(*b*) *The Three Main Characters Theory*

The defenders of this view to be specially named are Jacobi, Ewald, Rothstein, and Andrew Harper, and of all the dramatic explanations it is the most popular. The first-named thought of Solomon, a young Shulamite wife, and her peasant husband. All later exponents think of the Shulamite as unwedded,

[1] Zöckler recognizes only five acts.

and the shepherd as her betrothed lover. A. Harper,[1] our best English commentator, describes the book as 'a series of lyrics, in varying form and rhythm, each representing a scene in a woman's life, and containing the history of love's triumph in it.' Not a fully developed drama, it yet has real dramatic elements, and is, in fact, a rudimentary drama. Some students (Ewald, Böttcher, S. R. Driver) believe it was originally intended to be acted, but Hitzig and his followers have adduced sound reasons to the contrary. It seems that the author has either actually incorporated in his work, or modelled some of his poems on, such songs as are known among the modern Syrian peasants as *wasfs*, i.e. descriptions of the bodily perfections or personal ornaments of bride and bridegroom or other beloved person.

The following is a common outline of the plot, from which individual interpretations somewhat vary: A beautiful virgin of the rustic village of Shulem (vi. 13), an only daughter (vi. 9), was forced to guard the vineyards (i. 5 ff.) by stern elder brothers very jealous of her good name (viii. 8–9). She had won and reciprocated the affections of a young shepherd (v. 16). Wandering one day in the garden to admire the opening loveliness of spring, she suddenly meets a company of Solomon's courtiers, and is either compelled or persuaded to come to the king (vi. 11 ff.), at first in Jerusalem (i. 1–ii. 7) and then near Lebanon (ii. 8 ff., iv. 8 ff.). The women of the Court, the daughters of Jerusalem, endeavour to win her affection for the king (i. 1 ff., vii. 1 ff.), who himself declares his passion (i. 9 ff., iv. 1 ff., vi. 4 ff.). But she turns away, affirming that she belongs to her shepherd-lover alone (i. 7, 12–14, i. 16–ii. 1, ii. 3–7), of whom at night she dreams (iii. 1–4, v. 2–8). He appears in person, and entreats her to flee with him from her dangerous position (iv. 8 ff.). Moved by her continued resistance and her steadfastness to her friend, Solomon magnanimously

[1] *Cambridge Bible for Schools and Colleges.*

permits her to depart, and with her beloved she returns home (viii. 5 ff.). Then comes the culminating point of the little drama—the magnificent praise of true love intended as the interpretation of the whole series of lyrics :

> Set me as a seal upon thine heart,
> As a seal upon thine arm ;
> For strong as death is love,
> Cruel as Sheol is jealousy ;
> The flashes thereof are flashes of fire,
> A very flame of the LORD.
> Many waters cannot quench love,
> Neither can rivers drown it ;
> If a man would give the whole substance of his house for love
> He would be utterly despised (viii. 6–7).

This exposition is much to be preferred to that of Delitzsch. (1) It is far more likely that a country maiden would be represented as loving a real shepherd than a king masquerading as one—a very improbable action on the part of the Solomon of history. (2) A far higher ethical significance is attached to a story of trothed love rising superior to worldly blandishments than to a series of expressions of mutual admiration between two. The song just quoted (viii. 6–7) forms a fitting climax. (3) To Solomon are given i. 9–11, ii. 2, iv. 1–7, vi. 4–10, vii. 7–9, &c. ; to the shepherd, ii. 10–14, iv. 8–15, v. 1, viii. 13, &c. It is held that a difference in tone between these can be detected. Those of the king are coarse and earthy in merely human passion. With no real genuine feeling in them, they reveal a voluptuary whose heart has become so dried up by sensuality that his love-making is called forth by physical charms alone, and couched in the extravagant language of stereotyped and conventional courtship. On the other hand, those of the rustic lover are said to be genuine expressions of the heart, warm with an ideal and devoted affection. (4) The daughters of Jerusalem (i. 5, ii. 7, iii. 5, 10, v. 8 f., 16, vi. 1, vii. 1 ff., viii. 4) are held to be a kind of chorus,

as in a Greek play. (5) Rothstein (Hastings's *D. B.*, vol. iv., pp. 589 ff., a very important article) points out the close resemblances to the Arabian story of Habbas and Hamda, and thinks that the poem is based upon a popular story that Abishag the Shunammite (cf. 1 Kings i., ii.) had refused to become Solomon's wife because of her love for a youth in her native district. But, if not concerning Abishag, the foundation of the Song is, Harper believes, some current tale of Solomon and a beautiful girl of Shulem. (6) Great stress is laid by the advocates of this theory on the unity they find in the Song. Throughout, the language and imagery, the feeling and spirit, are similar. Phrases are used which send the thoughts of the reader from one part of the book to another (i. 7, iii. 1–4 ; ii. 7, iii. 5, viii. 4 ; ii. 17, iv. 6, viii. 14 ; ii. 16, vi. 3 ; ii. 5, v. 8 ; i. 6, iii. 4, viii. 2, 5). The narrator is one of the actors (iii. 1 ff., 6, v. 2 ff., viii. 8 ff.), and the poet nowhere appears. There are voices of several recognizable characters. One constant thread runs all through ; the beautiful portrait of the maiden is the same everywhere.

On the contrary, opponents urge : (1) The unity has been considerably exaggerated by its exponents, and, if not actually assumed, certainly not proved (cf. *Enc. Biblica*, p. 691). (2) The fact that on the three-character hypothesis the book has a higher ethical significance than on some others does not necessarily prove it correct. (3) Some (e.g. Delitzsch, N. Schmidt) can see no perceptible difference between the language of Solomon and the shepherd, and the responses of the maiden assigned to one or the other. The former scholar pertinently asks ' whether words such as iv. 13 are less sensuous than iv. 5, and whether the image of the twin gazelles is not more suitable in the mouth of the shepherd than the comparison of the attractions of Shulamith with the exotic plants of Solomon's garden.'

Moreover, (4) if intended as a drama, why are there no titles and stage instructions ? Either the author

did not give them, or the scribes failed to copy them. In Job, each of the different speakers is properly introduced. Why not here? Scholars consequently do not agree where the speakers should be placed, and as to the limits of the various actions. In reply, W. H. Bennett suggests that headings and directions were in the original poem, but were removed when it was decided to regard the book as an allegory; while Harper thinks that, if originally there, they were removed in the Maccabean time, lest the book should come under the abhorrence then felt for anything that savoured of the Greek spirit, and afterwards lost. But the latter critic is of the opinion that such external indications were absent from the first. He brings forward two parallel cases. In Michael Angelo's poem on the death of Cecchino Bracci all indications of the various speakers are left out, and his German translator felt it necessary to supply them. Robert Browning's 'In a Gondola' is the other, with its combination of monologue, dialogue, and musing, and the barest introductions, such as, 'He sings,' 'She speaks,' 'He muses,' &c., all of which might have been added later, as was the case with some other of his poems. With respect to the Song, the original readers would not be so perplexed as we, inasmuch as the Hebrew has different forms for certain masculine and feminine pronouns which to us are the same for both sexes; and, besides, if the poem was based upon a well-known story, they would know what to expect.

(5) The story is not at all self-evident, and has to be read into the book. Nor can it be carried through without an arbitrariness and artificiality altogether too ingenious. The poem gives the impression of great artistry, but if written as a drama its author was very unskilful. None of the scenes is long enough to have been acted; the longest can be read in about a couple of minutes. Some of the scenes are in reminiscence, or belong to dreamland. The speakers seem uninfluenced by the words of the others. (6) While

it must be allowed that some early stories contained dramatic elements, there is no example in early Jewish literature of a fully developed drama. It was too Greek for good Jews, who abhorred the play. Not until the time of Herod were theatrical performances held in Jerusalem, and the first Jewish play—written in Greek, however—was the dramatization of the Exodus by Ezekiel of Alexandria in the second century B.C. But if the Song is really a drama, the objection falls to the ground. Further, the plot of the Song is exceedingly simple, and the dramatical elements very rudimentary. (7) Though Harper (pp. 91 f.) protests, it would seem as if the actual marriage, instead of being reached in the last sections, had been consummated long before (i. 2 ff., 12 ff., ii. 1–6, iii. 1–5, v. 1). (8) Was Solomon the voluptuary the sort of man to be represented as freely letting a beautiful maiden go, once she had been in his harem? (9) It is difficult to suppose that a shepherd would have been allowed to approach a maiden detained by the king. A sufficient answer to this is the fact that even a despot's harem has again and again proved accessible to the true lover.

It remains to be mentioned that Bruston sees in iii. 6–v. 1 a marriage of Solomon with a Tyrian princess, this throwing up into still bolder relief the faithfulness of the Shulamite. Stickel finds two plots and two pairs of lovers, the second pair in i. 7 f., i. 15–ii. 4, iv. 8–v. 1. These, a shepherd and shepherdess, with their undisturbed love and imminent marriage, are set over in contrast to the troubles of the other pair, the Shulamite maiden (a vine-dresser) and her lover. Such a theory so much more complicates the already complicated dramatic hypothesis as to help to destroy it altogether; yet, in its view that more than one pair of rustic lovers is introduced, it points forward, so it it is held, to the interpretation of the book as an anthology of love-poems.[1]

[1] William Dearness, in *A Restoration of the Drama of Canticles* (1911), even adds to the list the father of the heroine and Solomon's chamberlain.

(B) The Collection of Songs Theories

(*a*) In the earliest forms of this interpretation, associated with the names of Herder, Goethe, Magnus, Bleek, &c., the Song is regarded as an anthology of originally independent love-songs loosely linked—a 'bunch of pearls upon a string.' The only unity is that they have been so arranged as to culminate in the description of the consummation of wedlock and its joys. But, while some critics have exaggerated the unity of the book, there is more than this interpretation recognized, as is proved by the dialogues, the repetition of words and phrases, and the similarity of style, imagery, and situation, as well as the voices of certain figures which appear all through. Yet that the Hebrews possessed love-poetry like other peoples is certain, though, apart from the Song, it seems to have perished (cf. Amos vi. 5 ; Isa. v. 1 f., xxiii. 16).

(*b*) *The Book a Collection of Wedding Songs*

The interpretation of our book as an epithalamium is as old as the time of Origen (A.D. 186–254), and was revived by Bossuet (1693) and Lowth (1753), who supposed it written for use during the seven days of the marriage festivities of Solomon and an Egyptian princess (cf. 1 Kings iii. 1). In 1860 attention was called by Renan to the similarity between the Song and Syrian wedding-poetry, and he offered the opinion that it was an ancient libretto for wedding festivals.

It was, however, upon the investigations, published in 1873, of J. G. Wetzstein, Prussian consul at Damascus, that the famous theory associated with the name of Budde was based. The consul records that among the peasants of modern Syria the first seven days after a wedding (called the king's week) are full of joy and feasting. The bride and bridegroom play the part of, and are respected as, king and queen, the while seated on the threshing-board, as throne, placed on the threshing-floor. In this mock Court, songs are sung of

love and war. There is much coarse jesting and dancing. Proof is given of the consummation of the marriage. Above all, songs are sung, called *wasfs*, descriptive of the physical beauty and wedding ornaments of bride and bridegroom. The *wasf* is somewhat gross (to us), clumsy, and stereotyped, and the weakest part of the songs.

It was not for a couple of decades that the importance of this was noticed, and then Budde, in 1894, proved that Wetzstein had opened the way for a new explanation. Even such defenders of the dramatic hypothesis as Harper and Rothstein find the influence of the marriage *wasf* in the descriptions of physical charms. Such songs as i. 9–ii. 4, iv. 1–7, v. 10–16, vi. 4–7, vii. 1–10, are clearly either *wasfs* or modelled after them. Later, in 1902, E. Littmann has shown that in Arabia popular bridegrooms are not only represented as kings, but actually given, for the time being, the name of the sultan on the throne at the time, or that of one of the more famous ancient monarchs.

Budde's theory is briefly this : The Song is a collection of Israelitish songs sung at weddings, and similar to the *wasfs* of modern Syria. The bridegroom is likened to the king (Solomon), and the bride to a queen (the Shulamite). The poems refer to *wedded* love only ; telling of marriage, its ceremonies, and the beauty of the newly wedded pair. The book is the repertoire of some member of a singers' guild, made to assist his memory by selecting and adapting such as he remembered or thought the best. The unity and appearance of dramatic action—which is there, although exaggerated by the exponents of the dramatic theory—is regarded as partly due to the addition of connecting-links by later editors, and partly to the songs originating in the same locality, following the same traditional convention, and written with similar feeling and motive. ' The songs may quite well have been transposed and arranged according to some guiding principle or principles, and, equally well,

trouble may have been taken to insert here and there transitions and connecting-links to bring life and movement into the monotony of the same ideas.' In the main this explanation has won acceptance from Cheyne, Stade, Cornill, Siegfried, McFadyen, Sellin, and many others. Bringing the book into relationship with Syrian poems, so strikingly similar in character, it seems to many the best explanation of the facts. There is no need to suppose that the songs belong to the same wedding; they may represent different types, or be a combination from different cycles.

The reader will find in Rothstein (*D. B.* iv. 592 ff.) and Harper (op. cit.) excellent statements of the objections to Budde. (1) Budde admits elements of drama and a certain unity introduced by later editors. Since he thinks such editing took place before the book was received into the Canon, it is as a dramatic whole, and not as separate songs, we have to do with it, whatever its previous history. Why not allow the dramatic elements from the very first? (2) The songs are far too few in number for a whole week's ceremonies such as described by Wetzstein, and, further, ours are all of peace, while many of those of the Syrians are warlike. There is little force in this; for the man would naturally make such a selection as suited him. He may have felt no call to give a full set of songs. (3) Harper thinks that 'Solomon' and 'the Shulamite' cannot refer to any bride and bridegroom, but to particular persons. But Littmann's discovery, mentioned above, that the use of royal names for the pair is found in Arabic love-poetry is sufficient answer. And while no 'queen' is directly mentioned, if the Shulamite be, as is probable, really Abishag the Shunammite (1 Kings i., ii.), it involves no strain upon the imagination to think of her as queen, and for a bride to be likened to her. (4) On Budde's theory, the present songs are out of order. The sword-dance song (vii. 1 ff.), for example, should, on the Syrian analogy, stand before iii. 6 ff. Budde explains this as

due either to the singer when old, or a spectator, writing them down from memory in the order they occurred to him. Or the disorder may have been due to a later editor, who failed to understand their character. (5) Considerable liberties have to be taken with the text to carry out the theory consistently. (6) The Syrian customs described are local and modern. It is assumption that they are primitive and universal in Palestine. If the songs are very early examples of such, would not Budde's editor, a Palestinian, have recognized that he was handling a cycle of wedding songs, and have understood their true character? (7) Are there not too many individual and particular references than would belong to a cycle or cycles of general wedding songs? (8) Our poem is too warm with personal feeling to make it probable that it is rightly brought into relationship with songs at such weddings as those mentioned by Wetzstein, where the barter-relation marriage is usual. (9) On this view, the great utterance on love (viii. 6–7) has no fitting place. On the dramatic explanation it is a wonderful climax to the series of lyrics. What suitable place can it have on the interpretation that our book contains a round of songs used at weddings everywhere, and, indeed, weddings in which, according to Budde, there was no pre-nuptial affection—the bride being really bought? (10) Budde's contention that only married love is described is strongly denied by many scholars. Surely in Palestine, as elsewhere, opportunities for the meeting of unmarried people, and their falling in love, were not altogether absent. Such passages as Gen. xxxiv. 1 f.; Judges xiv. 1 f., 7; 1 Sam. xviii. 20, and the laws in Exod. xxii. 16 f. and Deut. xxii. 23 ff., prove this.

(*c*) *An Anthology of Love-Lyrics*

Many critics (Gordon, Haupt, Schmidt, Wheeler Robinson) regard Budde's contentions, in the main, as valid. But, influenced by the strength of the

objections, they take a wider view. He thought only of wedded love and marriage songs. The indications are that the *wasf* was not limited to wedding festivities, but could refer to lovers generally, married or unmarried. Dalman has brought forward Arabic parallels of *wasfs* sung of loved ones other than bride and bridegroom. The Song is a collection of Hebrew love-lyrics—nuptial and pre-nuptial—coming in the main from one author, but in which he probably incorporated some earlier wedding *wasfs* and floating pieces of erotic poetry.[1]

(C) The Song Originally an Adonis–Tammuz Liturgy

The Old Testament proves the existence of a Tammuz cult within Israel. Ezekiel (viii. 14) saw women weeping for him. Isaiah (xvii. 10) refers to Adonis-plantations. There was mourning in the valley of Megiddo for Hadad-Rimmon, who is probably to be identified with Tammuz (Zech. xii. 10). And such passages as Amos viii. 10, Jer. xxii. 18, and Zech. xii. 11 point to the mourning practices for him.[2] Professor T. J. Meek,[3] of Toronto, has elaborated the theory that the Song was originally an Adonis–Tammuz liturgy, adopted from Canaanitish religion, and reinterpreted as it was incorporated into the higher Yahweh cult of the Hebrews. In the earliest form it was a Passover liturgy, setting forth the love of Tammuz and Ishtar, king and queen of heaven, and also that of the pair who impersonated the god and the goddess. This religion being a fertility cult, the Song was originally recited with rites intended to work, by

[1] D. S. Margoliouth, in Gore's *Commentary*, thinks of a collection from different sources, written and oral.

[2] Contra, Burney, *Book of Judges*, p. 333.

[3] A brief exposition is in *The Journal of Religion*, May 1927, p. 258. For a fuller presentation see the articles by Meek and W. H. Schoff in *The Song of Songs: A Symposium*, printed for the Oriental Club of Philadelphia.

sympathetic magic, upon the deities of nature, that life and vegetation might be revived, to produce fertility of the womb and the fields. It is a common belief amongst ancient peoples, and many even of to-day, that the performance of certain imitative actions by them will influence the gods to do likewise within their own spheres of activity. 'In the fertility cult some one represented the god, another the goddess; there was the wooing of the two; and the rites culminated in their marriage and union. This was supposed to have like effects on the deities themselves, and the result would be fertility in nature, since the gods were nature. This is exactly what we have in Canticles. A maid and her beloved are wooing each other to the end that there may be a revival of life in the world (cf., e.g., Cant. vi. 11, vii. 13, ii. 10 ff.).' There is only one pair of lovers throughout, and the book, instead of containing secular songs, was distinctly religious from the first. Its present form, however, is not the original one. The religious import has been changed to meet new and higher conditions, beliefs, and practices; and its symbols and material allusions have been supplemented by others, drawn from a nobler faith.

Meek had a predecessor in W. Erbt, who in 1906 suggested that our book was a collection of Paschal hymns on the love relations of the sun-god Tammuz (= Dod, Shelem) and the moon-goddess Ishtar (= Shelamith). But the publication by Ebeling of a catalogue of Babylonian hymns has led Meek to propound a more elaborate view.

In favour of this interpretation it is urged: (1) Ample proof exists that when the Hebrews entered Palestine, and passed from a more or less nomadic into an agricultural form of life, they were strongly influenced by Canaanitish civilization. They took over the high places, many of their customs, institutions, and practices. Very probably the three great agricultural feasts—Unleavened Bread, Weeks, Booths—are of such

an origin. The prophets clearly show that in the lower popular religion of their people were many elements from the sensual fertility cults of Canaan. And so, is it at all improbable, but rather otherwise, that traces of the Tammuz worship, which, as already noticed, did exist within Israel, should survive in the literature? (2) The Song was read liturgically during the Passover Feast. The Passover is associated with the Spring Feast of Unleavened Bread, which was of Canaanitish origin, the two being blended into one. The connexion of our book with this feast is not accidental, for it goes back to pre-Israelite Canaan. (3) The technical name for a ritual-song, *zāmîr* (Babylonian, *zamáru*), occurs in ii. 12, 'The time of *zāmîr* has come.' (4) The Mishna (Taanith iv. 8) tells us that at the festival of 'Wood-Bringing,' held on the 15th of Ab, it was customary for 'the daughters of Jerusalem' (cf. Cant. i. 5, &c.) to go out and dance in the vineyards. Unmarried youths also went out, and in alternate singing the latter used the words of iii. 11. Thus the Song seems associated with practices originating in fertility rites. (5) The allegorical interpretation was attached very early to the Song, which is extremely natural if it was originally a kind of allegory of the wooing and marriage of a god and goddess impersonated by a man and woman. (6) In the book the bridegroom is called both a king and a shepherd. In the fertility liturgies the king himself often played the part of the god, who was even more frequently called a shepherd. Schoff thinks that originally, and, in later times under foreign domination, a ceremonial king and queen were elected each spring to represent Tammuz and Ishtar, and that under the monarchy the actual king and queen took over their functions. (7) If merely secular love-songs, it is hard to explain how it was ever received into the Sacred Canon; but if originally an ancient book with a distinctly religious purpose, which had been reinterpreted to suit higher beliefs, it is easy to understand. (8) The bridegroom is often addressed

as '*dôdî*' (i. 13–16, v. 2, and elsewhere). This means 'my uncle.' But in Canticles and Isa. v. 1 it is given the unusual meaning: 'my beloved,' a significance more properly belonging to another word (*yādîd*). Now an ancient fertility god, the Palestinian counterpart of Tammuz, was called Dod, or Adad; and is it not certain that originally *dôdî* was just 'my Dod,' as we have 'my Tammuz' in the liturgies? This later was interpreted as 'my beloved,' yet in one passage (v. 9), so perplexing to commentators, the name stands out clearly in the Hebrew: 'Who but Dod is thy beloved?' (9) The name for the maiden, 'The Shulamite' (vii. 1), goes back to Dod's consort, Shala, or Shulmanitu (= Ishtar), as was her title in Jerusalem. (10) The language is full of symbols and material allusions, which find their simplest explanation in connexion with fertility cults. Schoff finds, out of 267 things mentioned, no less than 134 which are specially suitable to the Tammuz cult. Meek argues that the youths and maidens so often mentioned have their counterpart in the sacred votaries or prostitutes of the pagan cult. Chapter i. 6 refers to the drying up of the vegetation under the sun—that is, the languishing of the goddess. Many passages, of which vi. 1–3 is the most important, refer to the search of the goddess in the netherworld for the dead god in order to bring him to life, a common theme of the fertility cults (cf. also ii. 4–6, viii. 1 f., v. 6 ff., iii. 3 ff., v. 2–7). As here, in the liturgies the infernal regions are represented as a sheepfold, a city with streets, and a garden. The so-called great hymn of love (viii. 6 f.) refers originally to the power of the love of the goddess to win the god back from the netherworld despite all obstacles which lay between this world and the next. Several references can be found (vi. 11, vii. 13, ii. 10 ff., &c.) which suggest a ritual performed, as in the pagan cult, to impart productiveness to the ground. (11) The Babylonian catalogue of songs found at Assur, and apparently connected with the Tammuz–Ishtar

worship, are very similar. 'The structure of the songs is the same (two lovers representing god and goddess wooing each other, and alternating in the praise of each other's charms); the general theme is the same (love); many of the phrases are quite identical; the figures are introduced in similar fashion; the lines breathe the same delight in love; and the intent of it all is manifestly to bring about the awakening of life in nature.' (12) The fertility cult flourished more strongly in the agricultural north than in the semi-nomadic south, and the places most frequently referred to are in the north (cf. section on Place of Composition, later). (13) The peculiar language points to a Babylonian–Canaanite origin. For example, the uniform use of 'sh' for 'asher' (=which), many of the peculiar words and hapaxlegomena, certain peculiarities of syntax. 'The language of Canticles, with the exception of those words and passages that came later to be attached to the book, is cult language, and manifestly cult language of the Tammuz liturgies.' D. S. Margoliouth (op. cit.) also connects Canticles with the Tammuz cult, regarding the absence of religious allusions as due to expurgation.

The only adverse criticism the present writer has seen is that of Professor N. Schmidt, of Cornell University, in the *Journal of the American Oriental Society*, vol. xlvi., pp. 154–64. He finds the above arguments unconvincing. (1) May be readily granted. 'It is natural that an effort should be made to find in Canticles the remains of an Adonis litany.' With respect to (2), the reading, at the Passover, of our book may be early, 'though we know it only as a mediaeval custom.' (3) *zāmîr* is not limited to the meaning 'ritual-song'; for Akiba the Rabbi complains of youths who sing the Song in the wineshops 'as a *zāmîr*.' As to (6), no traces can be found that the monarchs and their queens ever did in Israel or Judah represent Tammuz and Ishtar. And in later times, under foreign domination, it 'is scarcely conceivable that

when the high priest became the head of the State, kings and queens were elected *pro tempore* to impersonate divinities whose worship was no longer tolerated in the presence of Yahweh. Any custom, symbol, or offering characteristic of the proscribed cults would naturally be removed.' (8) Meek and Erbt's rendering of v. 9 is grammatically without justification. The natural meaning is simply : 'What is thy lover more than a lover (any lover) ?' (9) The identification of the Shulamite with Shala, a mountain-goddess, whose home Meek thinks was Lebanon, is also unconvincing. The maiden of Lebanon of the Song has none of the marks of a deity. With respect to (10), Schmidt protests that almost everything a pair of Syrian lovers would notice and mention are brought into connexion with the Tammuz cult, and allegorized into veiled allusions to the lower regions and religious prostitution. As to (11), not all the Assur songs are religious, though some seem to be such. The similarities mean only that lovers are wont to use similar language in praising each other's charms. In Canticles there is no suggestion of either god or goddess. Nor is there a single hint of the fertility-cult motive, the productiveness of the womb and the fields. As to the language (13), Schmidt notes that Schoff admits the addition of late Greek and Persian words, and the mention of things indicating a post-Alexandrian editing. The examination of the words given by Meek shows that no proof exists that any of them are Babylonian loan-words. The use of 'sh' for 'asher' is a sign of lateness.

Both Meek and Schoff believe the original liturgy to have been revised in the interests of the conditions, beliefs, and practices of the higher religion of Yahweh. The former thinks that Solomon's name became attached because he was the king *par excellence*, or, with Erbt, as a later interpretation of the original Shelem (=Dod, Tammuz). Shala became 'the Shulamite,' because, when Solomon's name was

attached to the book, the word was confused with 'the Shunammite' of 1 Kings i. and ii., the original goddess thus becoming a simple maiden. Schoff thinks of two main stages in the revision of the Song. It began as an early Canaanitish ritual. The worship of Tammuz–Ishtar was dominant in Jerusalem when David took it from the Jebusites. This worship was continued and assimilated. Solomon favoured it for political purposes. During the early kingdom it was adapted for use in the First Temple by various additions and thus legitimized, in spite of prophetic opposition. Gradually, Solomon was substituted for Tammuz and the Shulamite for Ishtar, Yahweh and the people being understood. As Dod had also the meaning of 'beloved,' the original reference to a deity was disguised. A second revision took place in post-Exilic times, when materials connected with the worship of the Second Temple were added. The whole purpose was still political, to conciliate and placate a Tammuz party within the Jewish State.

It cannot be said to be proved that the Song is actually a revised Tammuz–Ishtar liturgy. Whatever may have been the case in earlier days, at the later period of strict Yahweh worship no such liturgy could possibly have found favour. Schoff's theory of revision seems unlikely to stand. On the other hand, Schmidt has not broken the force of all the arguments of Meek. One thing the Toronto professor has done well worth while—he has clearly shown that the Song is connected with this form of worship. The source of some of the matter is plain to the scholar. One may hesitate to go all the way with him, but it must be regarded as now sure that the author or authors of our book did use certain material originating in the practices of the Tammuz–Ishtar worship of Canaan. And here, then, is still another example of the marvellous genius of the Hebrew people to reinterpret in the interests of higher religion such pagan elements of their environment as were capable of being purified

and made the foundations of a finer development. This is not necessarily to abandon altogether Budde's theory of connexion with the Syrian wedding-week. May not these practices themselves enshrine some elements belonging originally to the ancient fertility cult?

(D) The Allegorical Interpretation

This is the traditional explanation, and among the ancient and later Jews the usual one. According to the Targum (in present form not earlier than the tenth century) and many rabbins since the time of Akiba, who died in A.D. 135, the Song is a continuous picture of the history of Israel from the departure from Egypt to the final redemption at the coming of the Messiah. To Joseph Ibn Caspe (*c.* 1322) it was an allegory of the union of the earthly body with the divine soul, to Moses Ibn Tibbon (thirteenth century) and Immanuel ben Salamo (1270–1330) the active with the material intellect (= the Shulamite), to Abravanel (1437–1508) the fellowship of Solomon with Wisdom. But commonly it has been regarded as referring to Yahweh's love for His people Israel. The method passed over into the Christian Church. The Song represents the intercourse of Christ, or the Logos, and the individual soul (Origen [186–254], Macarius [fourth century], Gregory of Nyssa [331–96], Bernard of Clairvaux [1090–1153]), or most commonly it is held to be the love-relationship between Christ and the Church (Theodoret [386–457], Augustine [354–430], Keil, Hengstenberg, Wesley, &c.). Luther thinks the bride to be the State, splendid and peaceful under the dominion of Solomon. To Hug she represents the ten tribes longing for reunion with the house of David under Hezekiah. Pufendorf believes that, in hieroglyphic fashion, it treats of the grave and death of Jesus and the believers of the Old and New Testament times. Others regard it as an apocalyptic prophecy of the history of the future Christian Church (De Lyra, Cocceius), or the story in

the Gospels and Acts (Moody Stuart). Teresa de Jesus interprets it of the marriage of the Trinity with the soul in ecstasy. St. Ambrose (*c.* 340–97), followed by Roman Catholic scholars, identifies the Shulamite with the Virgin Mary. E. Tobac (Paris, 1925) thinks that the original writer had in mind the love-relationship between Yahweh and Israel, but that the Holy Spirit also designed to set forth the relationship between God and the Virgin, the believing soul, and the Church. To Dante and the later Rosenmüller the bride is the personification of wisdom. G. Kuhn, one of our latest interpreters (1926), says it is an allegory of the passion of a soul for wisdom appearing in the person of Solomon. Thus the Song has been a veritable mine of stored mysticism. Nor are the various views exclusive. Origen, for example (cf. Tobac above), identifies the Shulamite with the soul pining for God or for Christ, or as the Church longing for Christ. Among the Fathers, Theodore of Mopsuestia (360–429) understood the book literally of the marriage of Solomon with an Egyptian princess, and paid for his boldness by being condemned at the Second Council of Constantinople in 593. He seems to have stood alone, though possibly he had fellows in Nepos of Arsinoe, Arnobius, as well as in Julius Africanus, and others of the School of Antioch. In later days the literal interpretation was adopted by Castellio (1544), Chateillon (1544), Peter Nannius (1554), Louis de Leon (1559), Hugo Grotius (1644), and one or two others ; nevertheless, until comparatively recent times almost universally the Song was searched for hidden and mystic allegories, and the method still prevails among the Roman Catholics, and even some Protestants.

One strong reason for this kind of interpretation is the feeling that to take it literally is to degrade it to the level of offensive erotic poetry unworthy of Holy Writ, and to give countenance to carnal sensuality. Bishops Lowth and Wordsworth, John Wesley, and

Hengstenberg have held this opinion in modern days. Thus allegorical views[1] (as in Greece with respect to Homer) are the outcome of a pious belief that the dearly cherished Sacred Writings can contain nothing but matter directly affording religious instruction and edification, and that, where such cannot be found on the literal interpretation, it must be sought for as a hidden and mystic meaning. Reverence is the parent of allegory. One of the charges made against the early Christians by Celsus and Porphyry—who, however, were no better themselves—was that anything in the Sacred Books which shocked their moral sense was glossed over by making it allegorical.

It is possible that this motive for the Song was suggested to the writer by the common Old Testament figure of a spiritual marriage between God and His people (Isa. xlix. 14–21, l. 1, liv. 5, lxii. 1–5 ; Jer. ii. 2, iii. 1–11 ; Ezek. xvi. ; Hos. ii. 2, iii. 3 ; Ps. xlv.). On Meek's theory, it was an easy step from a Tammuz–Ishtar allegory to a higher symbolic meaning. Even in the New Testament, Jesus speaks of Himself, or is spoken of, as a Bridegroom (Matt. ix. 15, xxii. 1–13, xxv. 1–13 ; John iii. 29 ; 2 Cor. xi. 2 ; Rev. xix. 7, xxi. 2, 9). The way to such an interpretation was thus easy.

But serious difficulties have been brought forward : (1) The Song is a far more elaborate composition, and in detail much more luscious and sensuous, than the simple marriage figure just mentioned. In the Old Testament the bride is generally represented as blameworthy, mostly as a harlot—a very different picture from that of the Song. Whenever this marriage figure is used, it is plainly symbolic, but our book does not give a single hint of allegory ; 'nor have we knowledge of a Jewish mysticism of this erotic type in the centuries from which it must have come' (G. F. Moore). Moreover, as Cheyne well says (*Enc. Biblica*, p. 683),

[1] Cf. *E. R. E.* i. 327 ff. ; *D. B.* i. 64 f. ; Hatch, *The Influence of Greek Ideas and Usages upon the Christian Church*, Lect. III.

in the prophetic allegory of marriage it was not so much free inclination on the part of Israel as a duty of obedience. And in later times the love of God never divested itself of the chastening restraints of legalism. Besides, the nobler spirits among the Hebrews were ever in conflict with the forms of sensual worship to which their people were so prone from contact with alien religions, and it is difficult to believe that one of them would have composed a religious poem with such detailed sensuous imagery. (2) The right to a place in the Canon of Scripture was still disputed by some Jews at the end of the first century of our era, no matter whether the discussion was as to whether it should be then admitted or had been rightly included previously. No New Testament writer cites or alludes to it. Could these things have been possible had it been originally written and interpreted as of deeply spiritual significance? There is evidence that, in the early part of the second century A.D., Jewish youths sang it as a profane song in wineshops, an indication of literal meaning. Not a trace can be found of the allegorical significance until the Christian era, when Rabbi Akiba (50–135) in the discussions at Jamnia, the author of 4 Esdras (*c.* A.D. 97), and Simeon ben Gamaliel (*c.* A.D. 120), showed that they held such a view. Not until Hippolytus (*c.* 225) did any known Christian use this interpretation, unless—though this is disputed—the author of the Odes of Solomon did.

Other objections, against allegory in general, and as applied to the Song, must be mentioned: (3) The literal sense is depreciated and frittered away in the determination to see a specific religious meaning. Interpretation is often taken into the realm of the irrational and grotesque. The significance of perfectly plain passages is seriously distorted. Scripture is brought into contempt; for it can be made to say whatever the commentator likes. Take a few samples out of many recorded in commentaries such as that of Zöckler. The palanquin is the cross, the nuptial

crown the crown of thorns, the purple cushion the Lord's garment in which He was mocked (Cyril of Alexandria). Since in v. 8 the concubines are more numerous than the queens, this perhaps signifies that the membership of sectarian congregations will be larger than that of the Church (Bishop Wordsworth). To Epiphanius, the eighty concubines are the heresies of the Christian Church, the voice of the turtle-dove (ii. 12) is the preaching of Paul, and the winter in the previous verse refers to the sufferings of Christ. In ii. 15, 'the little foxes that spoil the vines' have been variously held to mean pagan Hamites, heretics within the Church, and evil thoughts within the heart. The bed of Solomon (iii. 7) is differently given as the Church, the land of Israel, the Temple, prayer, the cross, the Holy Scriptures, Jesus, the heart of the Christian, &c. I have noticed no less than a score of different meanings assigned to the two breasts of iv. 5, all with as much or as little justification. To Hengstenberg, the navel of the Shulamite (vii. 3) is the cup from which the Church revives those thirsting for salvation. All such puerilities disprove themselves. They are simply put there, and ignore the natural meaning. Further, they suppose the ancient writer to have possessed a knowledge of the higher Christian doctrine—an impossible anachronism. And, since all Scripture was written for the edification of the original readers especially, and has a primary reference to its own times, can it be that the author here passed by the needs of such readers, and purposely set forth mysteries—even if he knew them—not to be understood for centuries by others?

(4) Not a few agree with Budde that the allegorical use of the Song's love-language has introduced into Christianity a highly dangerous element of sensuality. 'The poem,' writes Adeney (*Expositor's Bible*, p. 51), 'has been used to minister to a morbid, sentimental type of religion,' and 'has imported an effeminate

element into the notion of the love of Christ, not one trace of which can be found in the New Testament. . . . Not a few unquestionable revelations of immorality have shed a ghastly light on the abuse of erotic religious fervour. . . . In some cases the religious use of the book is perfectly nauseous, indicating nothing less than disease of religion.' Nuns have not seldom given such sensuous expression to their longings for the divine Bridegroom as to suggest, not only religious passion, but unsatisfied sex. S. Angus (*The Mystery Religions and Christianity*, p. 117) quotes from a document dated October 8, 1900, and relating to the canonization of Crescentia Hoss: 'Jesus Christ, our Lord, has espoused the virgin Crescentia . . . by the giving of a ring in the presence of the most Holy Mother, her guardian angel presenting her to her Spouse.' He adds: 'One may recall how fervently Abelard urges upon the superior soul of Hélöise that his place as husband has been vacated for her Lord.' How often has the language of the Song assisted the substitution of a sensuous exhilaration for genuine religion!

Yet there is another side. Some of the finest of Christian souls have found in the Song just what they needed to express the depth and the warmth of their love for Christ. Think, for example, of St. John of the Cross, with his more than seventy references, or of the great Scotch saint, Samuel Rutherford, whose letters are full of them, or of St. Bernard of Clairvaux and his eighty-six sermons on the first two chapters, or of Thomas Aquinas on his death-bed dictating a commentary upon it amid such visions of the love of God as made him feel that all he had ever written on scholastic theology was, in comparison, of no value! What of J. Mason Neale, Moody Stuart, George Bowen, John Bunyan, Dora Greenwell, Christina Rossetti, and Murray McCheyne, and a host of others? These devout souls were fed and nourished on the Song, and many of our most deeply spiritual sermons have been based upon it. In the Methodist Hymn-Book, no less

than thirty-nine hymns refer to it. Would we not be immeasurably poorer without Mudie's

I lift my heart to Thee,
Saviour divine !

or Bonar's

I rest my soul on Jesus,
This weary soul of mine ;

or Charles Wesley's

Thou Shepherd of Israel, and mine ?

(E) The Typical Interpretation[1]

The undoubted facts that so many choice and beautiful Christians have found in the Song meat and drink for their souls, and yet that the allegorical interpretation is beset with the gravest difficulties, have led to the view that it has a typical meaning. So think Delitzsch, Bishop Lowth, Godet, D. S. Margoliouth,[2] Davison, Falconer, and, somewhat hesitatingly, A. Harper. The book is held to have a double meaning, outer and inner. Primarily, the reference is to earthly love and lovers, but a secondary and mystical reference is present—divine and heavenly love. Many believe that the writer deliberately intended it to be so read : first in the natural sense of purely human affection and its expression, but his further purpose was to mirror forth the higher spiritual love. Some (e.g. Zöckler, Falconer, Davison) would further suggest that, even if only the lower love was in the mind of the author, there is no reason why others should not take the higher and more spiritual significance as of the Holy Spirit.

As some examples of this mystical sense, mark : It refers to the love of Yahweh for Israel (Keil) ; a

[1] On Typology in general see *E. R. E.* i. 330, 585, ii. 581, vii. 391, xii. 500 ff. The Fathers of Antioch developed this method in opposition to the allegorizing of those of Alexandria.

[2] In his latest opinion (Gore's *Commentary*) he seems to regard the book as partly typical and partly allegorical.

prophetic foreshadowing of the love of Christ for His Church (Delitzsch) ; while Zöckler combines the two. To Moses Stuart and A. Mackay it is the soul's love for God. The same method can be applied to the three-figure dramatic theory as well. According to Godet, Solomon is the earthly Messiah, the virgin the true Israel ; the shepherd is Yahweh and the coming Messiah. Delitzsch mentions the Jew Malbim, who thinks Solomon the sensual impulse, the maiden the spirit-soul, the little sister the natural soul, and the shepherd the Shepherd of the universe. S. R. Driver favours the shepherd as God, the maiden as His faithful servant, and Solomon the blandishments of the world. Falconer interprets : With reference to Israel, the shepherd is Yahweh, the Shulamite the victory of Israel over worldliness by the power of steadfast love, in which there is the anticipation of the more intimate union with Him in the Messianic age. But for Christians the shepherd is God in Christ in love-relation to the Church or the individual soul ; the Shulamite represents love's victories over worldliness, a love strengthened by memory, fear, the practice of the presence of the Unseen Lover, and by the hope of a more intimate union at His advent.

(1) In favour of this secondary and typico-mystical meaning it is argued that nothing is exhausted by its first use. If the Song as symbol is helpful to the religious experience, it is legitimate so to interpret it. Such wonderful human love does enable many to grasp the significance of the higher love for God, and provides a fitting instrument for the vividly personal expression of it. And, seeing that very early it was held to be impregnated with spiritual meaning, it is too bold to deny that such mystic meaning may have been in the mind of the writer as well as the external and literal one, or to assert that the Holy Spirit no longer leads the believing soul to the progressive understanding of divine revelation.

(2) Have we not the example of Jesus Himself in His use concerning Himself of the signs of Jonah (Matt. xii. 39), of the brazen serpent (John iii. 14), and the manna (John vi. 30 ff.)? Both He and His followers found in the Old Testament many references which were regarded as witnesses concerning Him. The Apostle Paul used this method in such passages as 1 Cor. x. 1–11; Gal. iii. 16, iv. 21–30, &c.; and the Epistle to the Hebrews is full of it. Typology is better than allegory, inasmuch as it clearly recognizes a primary and literal meaning and depends upon it, and consequently is more just to history, to which it assigns a real significance. And if Hosea could think of his own love for his wife as a type of that of God, is it not possible, even probable, that the writer of the Song had some such deeper meaning in mind?

(3) Our book is Eastern, and, in the East, human love is often used to typify spiritual love, the lower affection easily passing into the higher. Scholars have often referred to Lane's comparisons in *Modern Egyptians* between Canticles and the Moslem love-songs he heard in Cairo, understood erotically by the vulgar but intended to convey a spiritual meaning. Omar Khayyám is probably, in the opinion of many students, not only singing of wine and love, but of religion as well. The poems of the Islamic Sufis are often both odes of human love and hymns addressed to God. The Persians Jami, Nizami, Hafiz, and the Bengalese Jayadaeva in his Gita Govinda, all wrote poetry full of erotic bacchanalian allusions which have a double reference, literal and spiritual. Hence the opinion that the author of the biblical book intended the deeper significance is not to be lightly rejected. As the Sufis found no language more fitting than that of human passion to shadow forth the conditions of religious ecstasy—

> Wine, torch, and beauty are epiphanies of Verity—

may not an Israelite, a member of a race to which the

carnal-religious rites of the Canaanite made such appeal, be adumbrating, as Harper believes, heavenly affections in his sensuous imagery? Meek has made it clear, at the very least, that amongst his material he used something of the Tammuz–Ishtar cult language; is it not possible that his was the temperament to whom such carnal imagery seemed specially suitable to embody his intense religious devotion? We must not judge him from Western standards.

On the contrary, it is said: (1) The Song gives not the slightest hint of spiritual ideas under the sensuous imagery; these other poems often do:

> Wine, torch, and beauty, all are present;
> Neglect not to embrace that Beauty.
> Quaff the wine of dying to self, and for a season
> Peradventure you will be freed from the dominion of self.
> Drink wine, for its cup is the face of the Friend;
> The flagon is His eye drunken and flown with wine.
> (Gulshani Raz, trans. Whinfield.[1])

> The mystic word which is veiled in poetry
> Is the shadow of that which is veiled in prophecy.
> (Nizami.[1])

At the end of each canto, homage is paid by Jayadaeva to Krishna, the god. (2) The objections to the allegorical explanation are nearly as strong against the typical. The latter can be as fanciful and extravagant as the former. It also leads to the most wild and unscientific exegesis. The literal and primary meaning is generally displaced and obscured by the symbolical, which becomes practically everything.

The present writer, however, after carefully examining the evidence *pro* and *contra*, is inclined to think that, while the Song was written primarily of earthly love and lovers, the possibility must not be ruled out that it had the further intention of expressing higher and spiritual love. The faults of later exegetes, with their often silly speculations, must not be laid at

[1] *E. R. E.* xii. 16; Harper, p. xxxvi.

the door of the author. Whether a drama or a collection of love-poems, he may have had, as in the case of other Eastern poets, the double purpose of expressing earthly and heavenly love. But the opinion that the Song is primarily an allegory of divine love is to be rejected.

III. Canonicity

The main facts are as follows: (1) The Jewish rabbis discussed the canonicity of the Song at the Council of Jamnia about A.D. 100: 'All the Holy Writings defile the hands [i.e. have canonical dignity[1]]; R. Judah says, The Song of Songs defiles the hands, but as for Koheleth, opinion is divided. R. Jose says, Koheleth does not defile the hands, but as regards the Song of Songs there is a difference of opinion. R. Simeon says, Koheleth belongs to the laxer decisions of the school of Shammai, but to the severer decisions of the school of Hillel. Simeon ben Azzai said, To me it has been handed down from the mouth of the seventy-two elders that on the day on which they elected R. Eleazar ben Azariah to the president's seat [at Jamnia] it was decided that the Song of Songs and Koheleth defile the hands. R. Akiba said, God forbid! no man in Israel ever disputed that the Song of Songs defiled the hands, for the whole world does not equal the day in which the Song of Songs was given to Israel. For all the Writings are holy, but the Song of Songs is holy of holies. If people were divided in opinion, it was as to Koheleth only. R. Jochanan ben Jeshua, the son of R. Akiba's father-in-law, said, As the son of Azzai says, such was the dispute, and so did they decide' (The Mishna of Yadaim, iii. 5). This debate was evidently about A.D. 118–120, a few years after the Synod of Jamnia, though some scholars refer the words of Akiba and others to

[1] The Sacred Books were so holy, or *tapu*, that after contact with them the hands had to be ceremonially washed. But, while this seems to be the origin of the phrase, no evidence exists of such washing being actually required.

the discussions at the synod itself.[1] Some of the rabbis were evidently offended at the frank and highly sensuous language, and the lack, when plainly read, of a definitely religious meaning ; and so they hesitated to receive it as Holy Writ. (2) In the first half of our second century the Song was sung by youths in wine-shops as an ordinary love-song ; for R. Akiba (died A.D. 135) pronounces a solemn anathema on such wanton singers, declaring they had no part in the life to come. Clearly they looked upon it as secular and erotic. (3) Josephus, in *Contra Apion* (*c.* A.D. 100), included it in his list of sacred books, which, he says, had been so recognized for centuries. Graetz, however, disagrees. (4) In 4 Esdras (*c.* A.D. 97) xiv. 37 ff., twenty-four is the number of sacred books to be divulged immediately, the number as in the ordinary Jewish Canon. (5) Neither the Song nor Ecclesiastes is quoted in the New Testament, and Philo (*c.* 20 B.C. to *c.* A.D. 50) also shows no acquaintance with them.

The evidence has been variously interpreted : (*a*) At the Council of Jamnia an authoritative decision was reached that the Song was part of Sacred Writ, a finding which was soon accepted as final, although, as the passage from the Mishna proves, the contrary opinion was for a little while held by individual rabbis. Or (*b*), all the books of the Third Division had been included in the Canon before the Christian era. The discussions at the Council of Jamnia, and those immediately after, were not on the question whether or not the Song should become Canonical, but whether it ought to have been given such rank previously, or whether, though recognized as Canonical, it should be withdrawn from public liturgical reading. The second alternative in (*b*) has not found general favour, it being held that the dispute was about scriptural rank. In favour of the first alternative of (*b*) is the

[1] It is difficult to decide how much of the debate recorded in the Mishna took place at the synod itself about A.D. 100. Some think of a second synod about twenty years later. See S. R. Driver in *Abingdon Commentary*, p. 98.

statement of Josephus that in his day the Song had been for long regarded as Holy Scripture. Further, according to the Talmud (Baba Bathra, 15*a*), 'Hezekiah and his college wrote Isaiah, Proverbs, the Song of Songs, and Koheleth' (cf. Prov. xxv. 1). No historical value can be placed on the Talmudic passage, which refers to the other Old Testament books as well, yet at the least it witnesses[1] to a comparatively early (*c.* A.D. 200–500) Jewish tradition that the Song was not admitted into the Canon late. In favour of (*a*), which is to be preferred, it is said that if an authoritative decision had been for long in existence, it is hard to believe that such a controversy could have arisen at Jamnia. The non-use by Philo and the New Testament[2] writers points in the same direction. As for Josephus, since he was a convert to Pharisaism, he would naturally hold the views of his teachers, to whom the book was Scripture, and who took one side in the dispute. The writer of Fourth Esdras was also contemporary with the Jamnia discussions, and adopted the same view. Finally, is it likely that a book long regarded as Sacred Scripture would have been sung as a secular song in wineshops?

The Song was admitted into the Canon for one or both of two reasons: (1) The authorship was ascribed to Solomon, and so held to conform to the rule that it was composed before the time of Ezra, when inspiration was thought to have ceased. (2) It was regarded as an allegory of distinctly religious meaning. Most scholars are of the opinion that it was admitted to the rank of Holy Scripture because it had already come to be treated allegorically, others that it was allegorized when and because it had been placed in the Canon. In favour of this latter view is that no trace of such an interpretation can be found until about the time of,

[1] And this no matter whether 'wrote' means 'reduced to writing what before was in oral form,' 'copied out and edited,' 'collected,' 'transcribed and circulated,' or refers to authorship.

[2] But see Ryle's *Canon of the Old Testament*, pp. 150 ff., 179.

and soon after, the Jamnia debates (4 Esdras, Akiba, Simeon ben Gamaliel). T. K. Cheyne (*Enc. Biblica*, pp. 683 f.) thus explains: Before the destruction of the Temple in A.D. 70 the Song was sung at certain popular festivals. After that time all expressions of exuberant joy were forbidden. In such gloomy days, in order to keep the book traditionally ascribed to Solomon, it was allegorized, and in this way helped to give expression to the more intense piety which adversity had created.

IV. Foreign Love Poems and the Song

J. T. Lessing, Samuel Wesley, and, more recently, Professor J. F. Mahaffy, consider that the Greek bucolic poet, Theocritus (*c.* 310–270 B.C.) directly alludes to the Song (i. 9, vi. 8–10) in Idyll xviii., having become acquainted with it in the Greek version. On the other hand, Grotius, Graetz, C. C. Genest, R. Martineau, and, more recently, Professors N. Schmidt and W. W. Hyde, think that the indebtedness is on the part of the Hebrew (Idylls xviii. and xxvii., &c.). Schmidt finds an even greater resemblance in such amatory poets of the Greek anthology as Meleager and Philodemus; and, followed by Hyde, regards the Song as an anthology of love-lyrics in the Greek fashion. This opinion can hardly be accepted. Closer parallels may be found among the Arabians, Babylonians, Egyptians, and other Eastern peoples, with their similar descriptions of physical charms and ardent affection.[1] Parallels to the language of our book may be found everywhere where sexual love is sung of by Oriental poets. On the theories of the Tammuz–Ishtar liturgy and Syrian origin see previous pages.

V. The Date

The facts to be taken into consideration are: (1) The Song contains Aramaisms, and words common in

[1] *E. R. E.* viii. 180 ff.; Currie Martin, pp. 346, 357 f.; Delitzsch, pp. 163 ff.; G. A. Barton, *Archaeology and the Bible*, pp. 473 ff.

Aramaic but never, or rarely, in biblical Hebrew elsewhere. Constructions are used elsewhere found only in Syriac and the Mishna. See lists in Driver's Introduction, *Enc. Biblica*, 693 f. (2) Except in the later title, the longer form of the relative pronoun (*ăshĕr*) is not used, the shorter form (*sh*) only being found. This form is found only in Exilic and post-Exilic writings (Lamentations, four times ; Jonah, three ; Psalms, nineteen ; Ezra, once ; 1 Chronicles, twice ; Ecclesiastes, sixty-eight times) ; and in writings thought to be of north Palestinian origin it occurs sporadically (Judges v. 7, a very early passage ; vi. 17, vii. 12, viii. 26 ; 2 Kings vi. 11). Meek thinks its origin to be the Babylonian *sha*, coming to the Hebrews early through contact with Canaan. The Phoenicians also had a shorter form. Still, it is significant that *sh* is found increasingly in later Hebrew documents, becoming in New Hebrew the common form. (3) Foreign words are found, such as ' orchard ' (iv. 13), from Persian *pairidaezia* (cf. Neh. ii. 8 ; Eccles. ii. 5) ; ' Nut ' (vi. 11), from the Persian ; ' palanquin ' (iii. 9), from the Greek *phoreion*, or, less probably, the Sanscrit *paryanka* ; and many others thought to be of Indian or Babylonian origin. Cf. lists in *Enc. Biblica*, p. 693 ; Meek, p. 65 ; N. Schmidt in the *Journal of the American Oriental Society*, vol. xlvi., p. 159. (4) The general tone of the Song is one of contentment, quietness, and peace. (5) Ben Sira borrows from the Song (so D. S. Margoliouth). (6) As late as A.D. 100, or even later, its canonicity was called into question.

The usual interpretation of the evidence is that it was written in post-Exilic times. There are two main views : (*a*) In the Persian period (538–331 B.C.). At this time Hebrew was still a living tongue, but the use of Aramaic was gaining ground. Neh. xiii. 24 suggests that up to 432 B.C. Hebrew was the common tongue. Gradually it was supplanted by Aramaic, except in the language of the schools. The Greek word may

have come to Palestine through Egypt long before the Greek period. Thus the date is about 400 B.C. (*b*) After the Greek conquest of Palestine (331 B.C.). Most students think this better harmonizes with the language and the disputes *re* canonicity. The date usually accepted is about 300 B.C. Others give more generally the third or second century ; while N. Schmidt thinks even of the first.

Very few now argue for a pre-Exilic date. The grounds given are : (*a*) The language with the so-called Aramaisms, &c., is the peculiar dialect of north Palestine, which was different from that of Judah ; and the author is specially acquainted with the north (cf. next section). But the evidence for this peculiar dialect is scanty, and Hosea, from the north, shows little or no trace of such.[1] Meek regards it as early, but the cult language of the Tammuz liturgies, of mainly Babylonian–Canaanite origin, a contention which N. Schmidt rejects. Others think the peculiarities are merely poetic. (*b*) The foreign words can have come in through Solomon's relations with the East (Zöckler), or some were inserted by later revisers (Adeney, Schoff), or came through the Canaanites from Babylon, Arabia, and elsewhere (Meek). (*c*) The mention of Tirzah (vi. 4) with Jerusalem points to a time in the tenth century, when it seems to have been the capital of the Northern Kingdom (1 Kings xiv. 17–xvi. 23 f.). But not only is it mentioned later (2 Kings xv. 14 ff.), it is also used as the name of a woman in the Priestly Code (Num. xxxvi. 11), and was known down to our fifteenth century. The name means ' pleasantness,' and could well have been used by a post-Exilic writer as a simile for the beauty of the Shulamite. (*d*) Our author shows himself acquainted with Hosea and the first part especially of the Book of Proverbs (Delitzsch, Hengstenberg, Zöckler). But the resemblances are too general on which to base such a finding, and the date of Proverbs i.–ix. is probably late.

[1] See Harper's *Amos and Hosea*, pp. cxl., clxx., clxxiii.

(*e*) The state of peace and contentment reflects the prosperous age of national independence before the Exile. But that joyous poetry can be written in times of storm the whole history of literature proves. And, as Gray urges, village life was not necessarily harder for the peasant under foreign rulers than under such native rulers as Solomon, Ahab, and Hezekiah. In most periods of Jewish history just such a poem could have been written. A post-Exilic date, then, best suits the evidence. At the same time, this does not rule out the supposition that some of the poems may have come from pre-Exilic times, or that the author derived some of his expressions and imagery from marriage festivities and the liturgies of ancient fertility cults.

VI. Authorship and Place of Composition

Accepting the conclusions of the last section, Solomon cannot have been the writer. Probably his name was attached in the title because of the repeated mention of his name, or because the same principle operated as with other parts of the Old Testament—Moses as the father of Law, David as the sweet singer, and Solomon as the typically wise man whose ' songs were a thousand and five ' (1 Kings iv. 30–4). If the three-figure theory be accepted, one author is to be expected ; but, if we have a collection of love-lyrics, the unity of motive and situation, as well as the similarity of imagery, also suggest a single author, though of course he may have sometimes adapted songs of earlier composition.

As to place of composition, some references point to the south—Jerusalem, Engedi, David's Tower, Kedar. Yet there seems most familiarity with the north—Lebanon, Damascus, Hermon, Tirzah, Gilead, Mahanaim, Bathrabbim, Amana, Shunem, &c. He may, however, have been a northerner writing in Jerusalem, or a man of this city setting the stage for his work in the north.

VII. Relation to the New Testament and the Odes of Solomon

No New Testament writer quotes from the Song. The older commentator, Hengstenberg, thinks that no Old Testament book is proportionally so frequently referred to. But this does not bear investigation. Swete and Schoff compare Rev. iii. 20 with v. 2, but there is no real parallel. Eph. v. 27 has suggested to some iv. 7, but a connexion is improbable. An interesting question is raised as to the relationship with the Syriac Odes of Solomon, discovered by Dr. Rendel Harris, and published in 1909. The Odes are variously dated by critics from the last quarter of the first century A.D. to the first half of the third, and it is debated whether of Jewish, Jewish-Christian, Christian, Gnostic, or Jewish proselyte origin, or even a Jewish work with Christian interpolations. The very names of both works invite comparison. Dr. Edwin A. Abbott, in his erudite volume *Light on the Gospel from an Ancient Poet*, sees in Ode vii. 1—'the running of joy over the Beloved'—the influence of i. 4: 'Draw me; we will run after thee'; in the reference to 'the Beloved,' 'the Son,' in iii. 9, an allusion to ii. 3: 'So is my beloved among the sons'; in iii. 8: 'the loving one hath found the Beloved,' a reference to iii. 1, 2, 4: 'I sought him, but I found him not,' 'I found Him whom my soul loveth'; in iii. 5 f., 'I love the Beloved and my soul loves Him, and where His rest is there also am I,' allusions to i. 7, iii. 1–4: 'Thou (or He) whom my soul loveth' and to Solomon as 'a man of rest' (1 Chron. xxii. 9); and the Song iii. 11, with its allusion to Solomon's crown, is the source of similar references in Odes i., v., ix., and xvii. Again and again, Abbott thinks, the Odes imply the influence of the mysticism of the Song. Montgomery[1] finds a literary link between Ode xix. and i. 2, where the LXX has, 'Thy breasts are better

[1] *The Song of Songs: A Symposium*, p. 21.

than wine,' and the Ode speaks of ' the breasts of the Father,' which ' are full ' and ' given to the world.' While Gordon also is inclined to admit traces of the Song in the Odes, most scholars remain unconvinced.

VIII. The Text

Some of the theories of interpretation assume extensive dislocations of the text, as well as many interpolations and corruptions (Budde, P. Haupt, Cheyne, Bickell, Perles, &c.). This is far too extreme, though dislocations and corruptions have crept into the text which the Versions help to correct.

IX. The Song as Literature

The Song is the most exquisite pastoral poetry. Many are the lovely pictures and charming imagery, felicitous and graceful expressions, picturesque and striking figures. The author was a literary genius, and produced a wonderful work of art. His words breathe of nature. Not wanting are descriptions of the pomps and luxuries in palaces, but he is most at home in the country. The loveliness of nature delights him. He names nearly a score of plants and over a dozen animals. The reader walks in the open air amidst gardens, woods, vineyards, mountains, streams, and orchards. He is led to think of flowers, trees, doves, gazelles, and incense-laden breezes. The poetry is that of spring : songs graceful and tender, passionate and appealing, ringing with intense yet simple joyousness. Of course, to us Westerners the imagery is too glowing and highly coloured. The frankly sensuous descriptions of physical charms and the luscious, amatory pictures are distasteful. Yet it is to be remembered that it was written for Eastern readers, to whom such expressions, as many parallels show, were thoroughly harmonious with their disposition. The *wasfs* are the least pleasing parts of the Song, being undoubtedly artificial and stereotyped.

Chapter VII

THE SONG OF SONGS

B.—THE TEACHING

(1) The ethical and religious significance will depend upon the answer to the question, What is the Song? A drama? An allegory? A fertility-cult liturgy? An anthology of love-lyrics? Or what? On the meaning, for those who have *allegorized*, enough has been said in the previous chapter. All such teaching is put into the poem by the interpreter. Very much the same judgement can be passed on the efforts of scholars who have accepted the *Typical Theory*. Yet the present writer thinks it very possible that, like other Eastern poets, ours had the intention of adumbrating a higher spiritual passion in the expressions of human and natural love. The trivialities of ingenious exegetes do not disprove this. The fact that the early Jewish allegorizers identified Solomon with Yahweh, and the Shulamite with His beloved people, the whole setting forth their love-relation, suggests the same as the spiritual meaning originally intended to be read along with the primary one of human affection. But to enter into greater detail as to the religious significance of particular figures would lead, as it has in the past, into a maze of profitless speculations. On the *Tammuz-Liturgy Cult Theory* of Meek it is argued that the religious import of original Canaanite ritual became very early changed to satisfy the demands of the higher religion. The Song always was religious. At first it was two lovers who represented Tammuz and Ishtar, but soon it was adapted to express the mutual affection of

Yahweh and His bride, the Jewish people. And, whatever was the first significance, this is the teaching of the Song in the form we have received it.

(2) Most modern students agree—even those who are inclined to accept a hidden spiritual meaning as well as the more obvious natural love one—that the latter is primary. (*a*) Exponents of the *Three-Figure Dramatic Interpretation* rightly show that it gives to the Song a most noble meaning. The climax is the splendid eulogy of love in viii. 6–7.

Two kinds of human love are exhibited. One is that of Solomon and the daughters of Jerusalem—polygamous, sensual, coarse, merely physical and degrading. The other is that of the Shulamite and her shepherd. It is affection strong and pure ; the real thing ; the love of one for one which absolutely excludes polygamy, superior to mere sense, faithful amidst trials and the seductions of wealth and worldly splendour, contemptuous of the dazzling attractions of Court life. The maiden's character appeals to all, so instinct with purity, sincerity, simplicity, dignity, fidelity, chaste and holy womanhood. Here is a story of the sorrows and longings of two loving hearts, their fiery trials and final triumph. The deliberate intention of the poet is to counteract slack morality and protest against debasing practices, to undermine and censure polygamy, and to set forth the ethical foundation of marriage. True marriage is a bond between two only, a love-knot ; not something bought by worldly price, but a free, spontaneous, and exclusive affection. He aimed at polygamy and concubinage, and a system of marriage in which the woman was contracted for at a price and so often used as a plaything. Such lessons are not without need, even to-day. Are loveless marriages, in which wealth and social position are the main factors, unknown among us ?

(*b*) On the *Anthology of Love-Songs View* the author has simply given expression to the glory of love, man

for woman and woman for man, setting it amidst all the loveliness of spring. He sings of love—its intense longings, its joys and sorrows, its strength and everlastingness, its freeness and spontaneity, its tenderness and beauty—and thus finds a fitting outlet for one of the deepest instincts of human nature.

(3) Yet more must be said if we accept any theory which takes the view that human affection is exclusively or primarily in the mind of the author of the Song. Love, sings the poet, 'is a very flame of the Lord' (viii. 6).[1] It is a flame divine. Human love is an inextinguishable blaze kindled and sustained in the heart by God Himself; in its primal purity a radiation from His own love, not something essentially different from it. True human affection means the presence of the living God in human life. The burning passion, purely human, of a Sappho, an Anacreon, an Ovid, is of an infinitely lower order. Genuine human love is not merely earthly; it is heavenly. The seal of God is set upon it by His presence in it. Hence it ennobles and transfigures and exalts the whole being of the man or woman warmed by its flame. Love is canonized as at the bottom religious. As Robert Browning sings in 'Any Wife to any Husband,' it is

> the spark
> He gave us from His fire of fires, and bade
> Remember whence it sprang, nor be afraid
> While that burns on, though all the rest grow dark.

(4) But, even if our interpretation of viii. 6 be wrong, and either of those given in the footnote be adopted, the presence of a book of love-poems in the Sacred Canon is fully justified. Think how much depends upon the purity and strength of the love of husband and wife. Is it not the strongest factor in the welfare of the family, and hence the most powerful

[1] Lit. 'a flame of Yah.' Many scholars think, however, that the reference is to the lightning flashes, or simply means 'a most vehement flame.' It is the only direct reference to God in the book.

force in society and civilization? Surely Niebuhr was right when he wrote: 'As for me, I should feel that something were missing in the Bible if there were not in it some expression of the profoundest and strongest of human sentiments.' God has put the stamp of His approval upon the love of man and woman. It is claimed as wholly within the sphere of religion. Marriage in its truest sense is no mere concession to human weakness, but a divine purpose, a sacrament of life consecrated to ends regarded, not as only secular, but definitely religious.

(5) Origen and Jerome inform us that the ancient Jews prohibited the reading of the Song until the age of thirty had been reached. It must be granted that it is not suitable for the young and immature. Matters are frankly dealt with which we are accustomed to hide by our conventions, and expressed in language far too unreserved for our Western minds. Nevertheless, this book, which sings of love, an affection pure, devoted, sincere, giving itself without reserve, constant, rising above the sphere of barter and family arrangement, spontaneous and unfettered as the gazelles and the hinds of the field, the free boon of the heart—this book needs no apology for its presence in Sacred Writ. Its theme is the Flame divine.

Chapter VIII

THE BOOK OF ECCLESIASTES

A.—INTRODUCTION

I. Contents and Title

To attempt even a brief analysis of the contents of Ecclesiastes would not be very profitable to the student. The writer's meditations are anything but coherently and systematically arranged. The arguments are little developed. Subjects change with startling rapidity. The sequence of thought is broken every few verses. There are many isolated observations, as well as repetitions. The opinions expressed are at times inconsistent and self-contradictory. In view of the probable origin of the book, on which more must be said later, it seems futile to expect to discover a perfectly orderly and continuous line of thought. The writer is a collector of opinions rather than a severe thinker determined on the presentation of matters in logical sequence. It is not impossible that the disorderliness may be due to his notes having been left, by his death, in an unsystematized and unrevised condition, and that, had he lived, they would have been logically arranged, and the inconsistencies removed by the statement of his final decisions. It may be, too, that his friends and later editors have wrought some confusion to the book by additions. On the other hand, the writings of Theognis, the Greek gnomic poet who was the main source of his foreign aphorisms, are also as unsystematic and disorderly, as disjointed and lacking in logical progress, and as inconsistent, as those of the Hebrew sage ; and it seems more likely that

the confusion and contradictoriness are mainly due to Koheleth's own methods of working, as well as his own peculiar mental and religious attitude to life.

Much division of opinion exists as to the meaning of the word applied as a name to the writer in i. 1, 2, 12, vii. 27, xii. 8, 9, 10, seven times in all : קֹהֶלֶת. It is the feminine of the Kal participle of קָהַל, a verb which occurs elsewhere only in the Niphal = to come together as an assembly, to assemble, or, in the Hiphil = to summon an assembly. Setting aside some curiosities of interpretation, for which the pages of Ginsburg's introduction may be read, the following are the meanings to which more or less probability may be assigned : (1) 'One who convenes an assembly' (Gesenius, Ginsburg, Peake, &c.), i.e. one who gathers around him a circle of hearers, or brings them into God's presence. (2) 'One who takes part in an assembly.' The LXX rendering is, Ἐκκλησιαστής = member of the ἐκκλησία, whence the Vulgate's and the English versions' 'Ecclesiastes.' In this case it means 'One who speaks in an assembly,' i.e. to those giving their minds to the study of Wisdom. So the Midrash Rabba which, however, thinks of Solomon delivering these discourses before the congregation (קָהָל). Jerome has 'Concionator' the E. V.'s 'Preacher,' and Plumptre 'Debater.' This interpretation has been widely accepted (Luther, Wildeboer, König, S. R. Driver, McNeile, Wright, Barton, &c.). (3) 'One who is an assembly.' So Tyler, *Ecclesiastes*, p. 64 : 'An ideal assembly of those Jewish philosophers, Stoic, Epicurean, and others, whose opinions were influential at the time when the book was composed.' But this is an accommodation to Tyler's view of the origin of the book. (4) 'One who collects or assembles' sentences, experiences, and opinions (Grotius, Mendelssohn, Dale, Lukyn Williams, &c.). Against this is the fact that the verb elsewhere refers only to assembling persons, and not things. Williams, however, well meets this by suggesting that the word is

used here 'not, indeed, directly of inanimate things, but of *persons represented by their opinions*.' This view is the most probable. It harmonizes with the author's method mentioned in xii. 9 f.; and is just the meaning required by the fact that he was indebted for many of his sayings to the Greek gnomic poet, Theognis, and others. 'Koheleth' thus means, 'Collector of sayings and opinions.'

Another debated question is the significance of the feminine form of the name, though found everywhere (even in vii. 27, where the ה is the article), with the masculine verb. (1) The word stands for 'Wisdom' (feminine) impersonated in Solomon; and in Prov. i. 20 ff. and viii. 1 ff., Wisdom addresses the people. But the accompanying verbs are masculine; and, further, Wisdom is not elsewhere regarded as the speaker, and is not likely to have said, 'I applied my heart to know wisdom' (i. 17; cf. i. 18, ii. 3, vii. 23); and the counsel offered is vastly different from that she gives in Proverbs. It is, however, the view held by Augustine, Rashi, Hitzig, Kuenan, Ginsburg, Ewald, &c. G. Kuhn has lately (1926) expounded a similar view: Solomon speaks through Wisdom, addressing, in this book, the outside public, while in the Song he speaks to an intimate and select circle of devoted hearers. (2) The feminine has an intensive force, as in Arabic, and then it means, 'One who completely fulfils the idea represented by the meaning of the word.' Thus the R.V. margin, 'the great orator.' So Box and Wright. Lukyn Williams and the Oxford Lexicon give 'the great collector.' (3) Since the feminine may express a title or designation of office (Gesenius-Kautzsch Grammar, 122), as in Ezra ii. 55, 57, it is such here (Delitzsch, Nowack, Cheyne, McNeile, &c.). Hence 'a recognized and official speaker in an assembly.' The second interpretation is probably the best. (4) Renan thought the name a cryptogram, while G. F. Moore believes the name was coined as a pseudonym, 'a mystification piquant

to the author's contemporaries, but impenetrable to us,' and Cheyne (*Enc. Biblica*, p. 2686) now suggests the name is the result of a combination of scribal error and editorial interpolation.

II. Place in the Hebrew Canon [1]

Ecclesiastes is one of the five Megilloth, or Rolls, of the third division of the Hebrew Canon, known as the Kethubim, or Writings, and was read liturgically in the public services of the synagogue on the third day of the Feast of Tabernacles. It is doubtful if it was always so read ; for, in the Talmudic treatise, Sopherim (in present form belonging to the eighth century A.D.), no mention is made of its use in the synagogue, although the other Rolls are.[2]

When the book was received into the Hebrew Canon is still disputed. The salient facts are : (1) It is not mentioned in any book included in the Old Testament Canon. (2) It was known in its completed form by the author of Ecclesiasticus, whose date is about 180–175 B.C. (3) According to the Talmudic Jerusalem Berakoth, vii. 2, in the reign of King Alexander Jannaeus (104–78 B.C.) Simon ben Shetach quoted vii. 12 by the formula of Scripture, 'as it is written.' (4) According to the Talmudic Baba Bathra, 3*b*, in the reign of Herod the Great (37 B.C.) Baba ben Buta thrice quoted x. 20 with the same scriptural formula. (5) According to the Talmudic Shabbath, 30*b*, Gamaliel I (*c.* A.D. 44 ; Lukyn Williams thinks of Gamaliel II, *c.* A.D. 100) in arguing with one of his disciples, whom Bloch believes to have been the Apostle Paul, was thrice answered by his pupil's quotation of i. 9 as Scripture. (6) Both Josephus (*c.* A.D. 100) and 4 Esdras (*c.* A.D. 97) seem to have included it in their

[1] Cf. McNeile, *Introduction to Ecclesiastes*, pp. 3 f. ; C. H. H. Wright, *Ecclesiastes*, pp. 4 ff., 451 ff. ; Ryle's *Canon of the Old Testament*, p.p. 206 ff. ; *Enc. Biblica*, pp. 670 ff. ; and commentaries of Barton and Lukyn Williams.

[2] W. R. Smith, *Old Testament in Jewish Church*, p. 173 *n.*

lists of sacred books, the former saying these had been recognized as such for centuries. There is thus good evidence of Ecclesiastes being recognized as authoritative in some quarters, at any rate, though Ben Sira's use only proves existence, not canonization.

On the other side it is to be noted : (7) There is no clear case of citation in the New Testament. Too much weight must not be allowed to this, as the contents were not such as to call for quotation. (8) Philo (*c.* 20 B.C. to *c.* A.D. 50) is silent as to the book, though neither does he refer to the Song, Daniel, Ruth, Lamentations, and Ezekiel. (9) The author of the Book of Wisdom (first century B.C.) deliberately set himself to controvert some of the statements of Koheleth as the words of the ungodly (cf. Section IV.). (10) Passages in the Mishna (see Chapter VI. iii. 1) show that in the first quarter of the second century A.D., at the time of the discussions at the Synod of Jamnia and even later, the rabbis were still disputing as to the scriptural rank of Ecclesiastes. The school of Hillel accepted, that of Shammai rejected it (Eduyoth v. 3). The Mishna was completed in its present form about A.D. 200. The evidence thus indicates that in some quarters the book was accorded scriptural authority as early as the first century B.C., but that in others, down to the second century of our era, this was denied. Opponents rested their objections on such arguments as these : vii. 3 and ii. 2, viii. 15 and ii. 2, iv. 2 and ix. 4, xi. 9 and Num. xv. 39, are contradictory (Shabbath, 30 *a*, *b* ; Midrash, Vayyikra Rabba, *c.* 28). Jerome also witnesses, in his comment on xii. 13 f., to the dislike of many Jews to the *carpe diem* doctrine.

The evidence here has been interpreted as that concerning the Song (see pp. 220 f.). (*a*) A final and authoritative decision as to canonicity was only reached at the Jamnia discussions. (*b*) Or the book had been canonized by *c.* 100 B.C., and the later discussions were to set doubts at rest as to its being rightly so received, or to exclude it from public reading. The former,

then, is probably the right one, and for the same general reasons advanced in the discussion of the canonicity of the Song. It is to be remarked that, even so late as about A.D. 190, Simeon ben Mnasya denied that Koheleth defiled the hands (Megilla, 7*a*), as but the product of Solomon's natural wisdom. But it is clear that, even before the Jamnia disputes, in some influential circles the book had been accepted as Scripture, though the binding decision was not given until then. The objections seem to have been overruled mainly by two things: (1) Solomon was the reputed author, although Rabbi Mnasya did not attach weight to this. (2) Because of the statement of i. 3 and the exhortation to fear God in xii. 13 f. (Shabbath 30 *b*; cf. Jerome on xii. 13 f.). The attitude of the early Christian Church was that of almost complete acceptance, though Philastrius, Bishop of Brescia (*c.* A.D. 380), refers to certain heretics who rejected it because of its worldly advice, and Theodore of Mopsuestia (*c.* 360–429) denied its divine inspiration for the same reasons as Rabbi Mnasya—as being the product of Solomon's own human wisdom only.

III. Relationship to Ecclesiasticus or Ben Sira[1]

The evidence is unchallengeable that our book in its completed form was used by Ben Sira, whose date is about 180–175 B.C. Close similarities can be found with (*a*) the original Hebrew of the latter book (discovered in 1896–1900); with (*b*) the Greek where so far the Hebrew is not known; and (*c*) also there are many passages in which the agreement is that of thought. The student will do well to compare the principal examples, those from the Extra-Canonical book being placed in brackets: (*a*) iii. 1 (iv. 20); iii. 11 (xxxix. 16, 33); iii. 15 (v. 3); iii. 20 f, xii. 7 (xl. 11); vii. 8 (v. 11); vii. 12 (xiv. 27); vii. 16

[1] Wright, pp. 31 ff.; Plumptre, pp. 56 ff.; Tyler, pp. 4 ff.; McNeile, pp. 34 ff.; Barton, pp. 53 ff.; L. Williams, pp. xxvi. f.; D. S. Margoliouth in *Expositor*, February 1908.

(xxxv. 4 [xxxii. 4], vii. 5) ; vii. 28 (vi. 6) ; viii. 1, xii. 14 (xiii. 25) ; viii. 4 (xxxvi. 8 [10] but see Job ix. 12) ; viii. 5 (xxxvii. 12) ; ix. 10 (xiv. 11 f.) ; xii. 9 (xxxvii. 22 f.) ; xii. 13 (xliii. 27). (*b*) iii. 14, 11 (xviii. 6) ; v. 3 (xviii. 22) ; viii. 12 (i. 13) ; viii. 17 (xviii. 7) ; x. 8 (xxvii. 26). (*c*) i. 14 (xiv. 18 Heb.) ; ii. 11 (xxxix. 34) ; iii. 1–8, 11 (xx. 6 ff. Heb., xxxix. 33 ff. Heb.) ; iv. 8 (xiv. 4 Heb.) ; v. 1 [2] (vii. 14 Heb.) ; v. 6 [5] (xviii. 22 Greek) ; v. 11 [12] (xxxiv. 1 [xxxi. 1]) ; vii. 8 (v. 11 Heb.) ; vii. 12 (xiv. 26 ff.) ; vii. 14 (xxxvi. 14 ff. [xxxiii. 14 ff.]) ; vii. 20–2 (xix. 10, 16) ; vii. 26 (xxvi. 23) ; ix. 16 (xiii. 22 Heb.) ; x. 12 (xxi. 27) ; xi. 10 (xxx. 23 Heb.).

IV. Relationship to the Wisdom of Solomon[1]

The great majority of scholars believe that the author of the Book of Wisdom (first century B.C.) deliberately set himself to controvert some of the opinions of Koheleth ; for in ii. 1–9 he introduces as the words of the ungodly (cf. i. 16) sentiments which are those of Koheleth, and, as far as we know, of no other ancient Jewish writer. In the following list the references in Ecclesiastes are given in brackets : ii. 1 (ii. 23, iv. 1 ff., v. 17, vi. 12, viii. 8) ; ii. 2 (iii. 19, ix. 11) ; ii. 3 (xii. 7) ; ii. 4, cf. viii. 13 (i. 11, ii. 11, 16, ix. 5) ; ii. 5 (vi. 12, viii. 8) ; ii. 6 (ii. 24, &c., xi. 9) ; ii. 7 (ix. 7 f.) ; ii. 9 (ii. 10, iii. 22, v. 18, ix. 9). Other cases have been noticed : iii. 2 f. (ix. 2) ; viii. 16 (i. 18) ; viii. 10 (ix. 11) ; i. 11 (i. 14, 17, ii. 26, &c.), which are more or less opposed to the utterances of Koheleth. Gregg and Williams dispute the general finding : The author of Wisdom gives (e.g. in ii. 10 f.) as sentiments of these ungodly people, advice totally alien from that of Koheleth (' Let us oppress the righteous poor,' &c.). The resemblances, it is said, are very few and doubtful ;

[1] Wright, pp. 53 ff. ; Plumptre, pp. 67 ff. ; McNeile, pp. 37 ff. ; Williams, pp. xxviii. ff. ; Barton, pp. 57 ff. ; Hastings' *D. B.* iv. 928 ; Gregg, *The Wisdom of Solomon*, pp. xxiv. f. ; Charles, *Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha*, vol. i., p. 525.

the standpoint of the hedonist in Ecclesiastes is altogether different from that of the voluptuaries of Wisdom ii. ; for he never rejects his religion and praises unbridled licence as they do. The author is not attacking Koheleth, but worldly minded apostates. Williams concedes that these latter may have used, wittingly or unwittingly, terms taken from Ecclesiastes. The general opinion, however, seems worthy of acceptance. Note that the important parallels are in the continuous passage ii. 1–9. It was just such ideas in Koheleth which led many Jews, as Jerome and others testify, to dislike the book. That other opinions are attributed to 'the ungodly' which are not those of Koheleth, may, as Barton suggests, be due to the bitterness of theological controversy. But more likely the explanation is that the writer was not thinking of Koheleth alone as he wrote, though it seems probable that the main purpose in chapter ii. was to correct his utterances and to indicate his own attitude in the discussions concerning the rights of the book to canonicity.

V. Relationship to non-Jewish Literature

A. Egyptian.—Lukyn Williams quotes, as a parallel to Eccles. ix. 7–10 and xi. 9 seq., the 'Song of the Harper' (*c.* 3459–3246 B.C.) : 'Give comfort to thy heart, and let thy heart forget these things. What is best for thee to do is to follow thy heart's desire as long as thou livest. Anoint thy head with scented unguents ; let thy apparel be of byssus dipped in costly [perfumes]. . . . Enjoy thyself more than thou hast ever done before, and let not thy heart pine for lack of pleasure. . . . Pursue thy heart's desire and thine own happiness. Order thy surroundings on earth in such a way that they may minister to the desire of thy heart ; for at length that day of lamentation shall come, wherein he whose heart is still shall not hear the lamentation. Never shall cries of grief cause to beat [again] the heart of a man who is in the grave' (Budge ; cf. *E. R. E.*

xii. 743, ii. 184, ix. 480, viii. 22 ; Cheyne, *Job and Solomon*, pp. 269 f.). In the 'Dialogue of a Misanthrope with his Soul' (*c.* 2100–1800 B.C.) we are reminded of Koheleth's longing for death (ii. 17, iv. 2 ff., vi. 3, vii. 1), due to revolt against the pains and lack of good in life. In both writers, death is better than life in view of the wickedness and the oppression which are all-powerful and without regard for the oppressed. The misanthrope's soul may shrink from death with horror, like Koheleth (ix. 4 ff., 10, xi. 7 f.), and, also like him, counsel the policy of *carpe diem* (ii. 24, viii. 15, xi. 8 seq., &c.) ; yet he himself regards life as intolerable, though, unlike Koheleth, he expresses his belief that in the after-life justice will be done to both wicked and righteous (cf. *E. R. E.* xii. 39, v. 786, viii. 25, ix. 480). In the 'Instruction of Ptah-Hotep' (fifth dynasty, *c.* 2600 B.C.) is the same counsel as that of Koheleth : 'Follow thy desire as long as thou livest ; do not do more than has been commanded, so as to diminish the time of following thy enjoyment' (Prisse Papyrus, 7, 9). Both sages draw a dark picture of old age (Eccles. xii. 1 ff. and Ptah-Hotep's Introduction), commend the enjoyment of life with a wife (Eccles. ix. 9 ; Prisse Pap. x. 6 ff.) and the careful use of the tongue (*passim*). Khekheperre-Sonbu (1906–1887 B.C.), the priest of Heliopolis, laments the oppression and corruption of the times. Righteousness is cast out ; iniquity is in the midst of the council-hall. 'All men alike are under wrongs. . . . The poor man has no strength to save himself from him that is stronger than he' (cf. Eccles. iv. 1 ff., iii. 16, v. 8). With Eccles. i. 9 f. ; iii. 15 cf. this : 'I wring out my mind for what is in it, in dislodging all that I say ; for it is but to repeat what has been said when what has already been said has been said. From the first generation unto that which cometh after —they are like that which is past.' In the 'Admonitions of Amen-em-ope' the little with happiness is better than wealth with trouble (XIII. xvi. 11 ff. ; cf. Eccles. iv. 6). And the Egyptian's 'Man knoweth not how the morrow

will be ; the events of the morrow are in the hands of God ' (XVIII. xix. 12) ; ' Of a truth, thou knowest not the designs of God. Thou canst not see the morrow ' (XXI. xxii. 5 f.) remind us of such passages in the Hebrew work as x. 14, iii. 11 (read ' ignorance ' instead of ' world ') ; vii. 14, viii. 7, xi. 5, &c. Cf. also Ipuwer (before 2000 B.C.) for descriptions of a disordered society as in Koheleth.

Yet none of the similarities suggests a connexion between Koheleth and these Sages.[1] Such reflections are not peculiar to our writers, but may be found everywhere and in all ages. The Kohelethean type of mind may be developed on very different soils by similar circumstances and happenings.

B. BABYLONIAN.—The confident opinion[2] that Hebrew psalmody owes no little to Babylonian psalmody compels the student to take into account possible traces of the influence of Babylon on Koheleth. We have what has been termed ' the Babylonian Job ' ; have we a Babylonian Koheleth ? Professor S. Langdon,[3] of Oxford, answers in the affirmative. He gives in full a ' Dialogue of Pessimism,' of which he writes : ' That the cycle of Babylonian Wisdom Literature to which the dialogue belongs influenced Hebrew thought in post-Exilic times, and especially the author of Ecclesiastes, may no longer be doubted.'

(1) G. A. Barton, in his commentary, quotes a parallel to Eccles. ix. 6–9 in the Gilgamesh epic (*c.* 2000 B.C.) so close that he seems justified in his opinion of a connexion between the two :

> Since the gods created man,
> Death they ordained for man,
> Life in their hands they hold.

[1] But see Sugden's *Israel's Debt to Egypt*.

[2] e.g. by H. Gressmann and others ; but see S. R. Driver in *The Psalmists*, edited by D. C. Simpson, pp. 109 ff.

[3] *Babylonian Wisdom*, pp. 67 ff.

'Thou, O Gilgamesh, fill indeed thy belly,
Day and night be thou joyful,
Daily ordain gladness,
Day and night rage and make merry.
Let thy garments be bright,
Thy head purify, wash with water,
Desire thy children which thy hand possesses,
A wife enjoy in thy bosom,
Peaceably thy work(?) . . .

The thought and language are very similar. Both commend the *carpe diem* philosophy. And, just as Koheleth finds even eating and drinking to be vanity (ix. 7 ff., ii. 24–6, &c.), so it is said in the 'Dialogue of Pessimism' (B 16) that not only fasting and thirsting, but even eating and drinking, lack satisfying pleasure and provide pain.

(2) Koheleth lays emphasis upon human ignorance and failure to obtain the knowledge so to order one's life as to please God (see Chapter IX., Section 2). Several Babylonian passages are of similar purport.[1]

(*a*) O that the god [or goddess] who is wroth with me would be pacified!
The sin which I have committed I know not.
My misdeeds I know not. . . .
Mankind is perverse, and no one has understanding.
Among all who bear names, who knows anything?
Whether they do evil or good, no one has knowledge.
(Rawlinson, iv. 10.)

(*b*) If I only knew that such things were pleasing before God; but that which seems good to a man's self is evil in the sight of God; and that which according to each man's sense is to be despised, is good in the sight of his God. Who can understand the counsel of the gods in heaven? A god's plan is full of darkness; who hath searched it out? How should men discern the way of God? (The Psalm of the Righteous Sufferer, ii. 33 ff.).

[1] Handcock, *Babylonian Penitential Psalms*; Jeremias, *Old Testament in the Light of the Ancient East*, vol. i., pp. 223 ff., 227 ff., vol. ii., pp. 264, 273; Farnell, *Greece and Babylon*, pp. 154 f.; Wardle, *Israel and Babylon*, pp. 88 ff.; *E. R. E.* iii. 746, xi. 531; Langdon, op. cit., pp. 19, 24 f., 33, 41, 77, &c.

(*c*) Who has not been negligent, who has not belittled himself?
Who comprehends the way of God?

. . . . . .

Mankind as many as bear names,
Who among them of himself attains knowledge?
(Langdon, 20, 25.)

(3) The 'Dialogue of Pessimism' is of special interest.[1] In its present form it belongs, according to Langdon, to the ninth century B.C., but it may go back in its original form to the period of the twenty-fifth to the twenty-second. Ebeling first published the text in 1918. The argument is cast in the form of a conversation between a master and his slave. The master suggests a certain course of conduct. The slave agrees, pointing out the benefits which will follow. The master then proposes not to act as at first intended, and the slave immediately mentions the disadvantages arising from the proposed action. The first dialogue sets forth the folly of seeking favour at Court, the second the disadvantages of eating and drinking; the third the vanity of the life of a hunter (?); the fourth seems to refer either to the futility of revenge or of acquiring a residence; the fifth to futility of rebellion; the sixth to the disadvantages of the exercise of mercy and forgiveness; the seventh to the ruin caused by loving a woman; the eighth to the uselessness of sacrifice to the gods and religious rites; the ninth to the vanity of exercising charity, inasmuch as it is requited by ingratitude; in the tenth it is said that both malefactor and benefactor share the same fate; and the eleventh and last teaches that death is better than life. The eighth and tenth dialogues are as follows:

Slave, attend to me! Yes, my lord, yes.
Fetch me straightway water for my hands: give it me; an offering will I make to my god.

[1] Langdon, pp. 67 ff.; G. B. Gray in *Expository Times*, vol. xxxi., pp. 440 ff.

Make it, my lord, make it. Merry is his heart who makes an offering to his god :
Loan upon loan he makes.
No, slave, I will not make an offering to my god.
Make it not, my lord, make it not !
The god wilt thou teach ; like a dog he will follow thee,
Whether ' my ritual ' or ' ask not ' or aught else he desire of thee.

Slave, attend to me ! Yes, my lord, yes.
Help will I give to my country. Give, my lord, give !
A man who gives help to his country,
His own help lies in the urn of Marduk.
No, slave, I will not give help to my country.
Give it not, my lord, give it not.
Ascend thou into the ruins of cities, go to those of old,
Behold the skulls of the later and former ones ;
Where is now the evildoer, where is now the benefactor ?

There are a few similarities. In Koheleth (vii. 26 ff.) is a thing ' more bitter than death, even a woman who is snares, and nets are her heart, and her hands fetters. . . . One man out of a thousand I have found, but a woman among all these I have not found.' In the Dialogue (G) she is ' a pit-trap ' and ' a sharp iron sword which cuts a man's throat.' The same thought of the vanity of eating and drinking has been already noted (1). Like Koheleth (ii. 4), house-building is a futility (D). God is independent of man's sacrifices to him, these being futile (Eccles. ix. 1–2 ; H). Rebellion against rulers will bring sharp punishment (E ; Eccles. viii. 2 ff.). Silence and speaking are profitless (?) (F ; Eccles. iii. 7, 9). The living soon die ; life is brief (K 40 ; Eccles. xi. 9 seq.). Both good and bad share the same fate in death : both are absolutely forgotten (J, see above ; Eccles. ix. 2–6, i. 11, ii. 14, 16). Death is better than life (K ; Eccles. vii. 1, iv. 2 f.) for one whose existence is full of trouble (cf. Eccles. vi. 3) ; though Koheleth is less consistent in clinging to life, even though a vanity (ix. 4, xi. 7). Like the Hebrew writer, the Babylonian sums up all activities as vanity and without profit.

(4) In vi. 10 : ' That which is, its name has already

been called, and it is known that it is man,' is probably suggested by the Babylonian language, as stated by Barton, who quotes the first two lines of the Creation Tablet I. Closer still are the parallels quoted above (2 *a*, *c*).

(5) The Babylonian ideas about Death-land, Arallu, are similar to those of Koheleth (see Chapter IX., Section 5). Arallu is the land of no return for good or bad, a shadow-land of darkness and no activity. The inhabitants exist in misery, with dust and clay for their food. The lot of the dead is unalterable ; no prospect is possible of redressing in a future life the inequalities of this. The man who died in battle, however, had a somewhat better existence. Langdon (28 f.) and Zimmern (*E. R. E.* ii. 316) find evidence of belief in a posthumous judgement awarding distinctions within Death-land ; but it is capable of other interpretations. At any rate, there is no return from Arallu ; and, even if, with Langdon, we accept the slight evidence for a judgement after death, we must also agree with him that even the best lot of the soul in the underworld is not preferable to this mortal life. Again, both Koheleth (vi. 3) and the Babylonians (Gilgamesh epic) find the lack of burial a terrible calamity, as the spirit of the unburied finds no rest.

(6) If in i. 5 Koheleth is thinking of the chariot of the sun drawn by panting horses, the idea possibly came from Babylonia ; though long before his time it had been introduced into Israel (cf. 2 Kings xxiii. 11). (7) Both the Babylonian Job (ii. 2 ff.) and Koheleth (iv. 1 ff.) find violence and injustice everywhere, the oppressed being helpless. The former writes : ' If I look about me there is evil, evil,' reminding us of Eccles. i. 1 : ' Vanity of vanities, all is vanity.' (8) Both the Babylonian Book of Proverbs (B, C, D, M, and N) and Koheleth (iii. 7 ; v. 2–6 ; ix. 17 ; x. 12 f.) praise right speech, and censure it when foolish and indiscreet. (9) Koheleth writes in v. 6 : ' Suffer not thy mouth to cause thy flesh to sin ; neither say before the angel

[probably the recording angel of justice] that it was an error . . . but fear thou God.' In the Babylonian Proverbs (N) we have : 'Make not wide thy mouth, but guard thy lips. The thoughts of thy mind not shalt thou speak at once ; for then quickly, what thou hast spoken, wilt thou take back again.' Does this refer to vows ? In favour of this it is to be marked that the next section (O) speaks of careful worship at the temple of the gods, and exhorts to the fear of them, specially mentioning the Anunnaki, the lower-world gods, who, some think, administered judgement when a man entered the nether world. (10) With the bilingual Book of Proverbs xxxvii. (Langdon, p. 84) : 'He is entirely good, yet he is clothed in rags,' compare Eccles. viii. 14 : 'There are righteous men unto whom it happeneth according to the work of the wicked' (cf. ix. 11).

With respect to the *carpe diem* parallel quoted in (1), it is admittedly close, and possibly, as Barton thinks, may have been used by Koheleth. And yet this philosophy can be found in Egypt, as already noted, and is typical of Greece and other various parts of the ancient world where death was thought to end all worth while. As to (2), it is clear that all the writers are oppressed by man's inability to grasp the meaning of the purpose of his God, and to know how to please Him. The divine ways are inscrutable, man is ignorant how to order his life prosperously. All undertakings are thus uncertain and chanceful. Yet the similarities are only general. Parallels may be found in the literatures of Egypt, and in such Greek gnomic writers as Solon, Semonides of Amargus, and Theognis. Moreover, sin to the Babylonians, though they often show a fine moral consciousness, was much more ritualistic than to the Hebrew. It might be accidentally eating forbidden food or unwittingly treading on filth—some unconscious violation of ceremonial regulations, bringing the wrath of deity and begetting despondency and a feeling of the profitlessness of life.

As to (3), Professor Langdon thinks the influence on

Koheleth proved. Yet again the parallels are general. The outlook in the Dialogue is completely pessimistic and despairing : death is the best thing possible ; all is vanity. The dialogue form, the weighing of the advantages and disadvantages of activities, the critical and despondent view, based upon experience, of life as profitless, do remind us of the Hebrew work. But a similar philosophy can be found elsewhere (e.g. in Greece). All that is proved is that a pessimistic philosophy can be discovered among Babylonian thinkers as the result of the critical weighing of the good and bad of life natural to such minds everywhere. With respect to (4), Koheleth seems to have used a Babylonian phrase. As to (5), the Hebrew Sheol and the Babylonian Arallu are indeed closely akin, but are the common property of the two peoples and of others (Greece) as well. In (6), the idea may be Babylonian, but, long before 200 B.C., had become the property of the Hebrews. As to (7) and (8), such reflections have been made by writers independently everywhere and in all ages. (10) is a commonplace of pessimistic thinking. A connexion may exist between the passages given in (9), though similar circumstances could quite independently have produced the similarities.

The conclusion must be that, except in the one instance of the *carpe diem* parallel, direct connexion does not seem probable. The one or two cases of similar phraseology are explainable by the fact that it is provable that Koheleth was a collector of opinions whose net was spread beyond the thought of his own land, or that such phraseology had passed into Palestinian speech. Babylonian thinkers had their problem of suffering. To some had come, through consideration of the tribulations of those endeavouring to be pious, the conviction that something was seriously wrong with the orthodox faith that here and now piety and wickedness received their deserts, and that deity was righteous. The same problem occupied certain minds in Israel altogether independently of Babylonian

influence. Koheleth also felt the pressure of it, but in collecting the material for his book, except for one parallel and a stray phrase or two, he seems to have worked elsewhere.

C. The Wise Ahikar[1]

Dr. Rendel Harris mentions one passage (Syriac A ii. 50) on which he writes: 'Apparently the sentiments of Ecclesiastes (vii. 1–2) are contradicted.' Hence the question of relationship must be examined. The story of Ahikar and his proverbs are found in several versions and forms—Aramaic, Syriac, Arabic, Armenian, &c. The evidence is clear that this cycle of tales and traditions has influenced the New Testament, the earlier Jewish books of Tobit (*c.* 230 B.C.) and Ecclesiasticus (*c.* 180–175 B.C.), and, among the Canonical books, Daniel, such a Psalm as cxli., and probably Proverbs. Thus the possibility of influence on Koheleth is not remote, especially when it is remembered he was a collector of opinions (xii. 9 f.). The investigation is included under the present general heading, inasmuch as the story is of heathen, and probably Babylonian, origin. Widespread in the ancient world, it was well known in Palestine before the second century B.C., and influenced Jewish writers almost contemporaneous with Koheleth. The date of the Aramaic text is, of course, pre-Kohelethean, in the fifth century B.C.[2] Of the other versions and adaptations, none of them is *certainly* pre-Christian. The stories and gnomic material show many differences from the earliest version—the Aramaic. Yet Dr. Rendel Harris says: 'If, however, the [Aramaic] papyrus in

[1] Cowley's *Jewish Documents of the Time of Ezra*, pp. xix. ff., 81 ff.; Charles's *Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha of the Old Testament*, vol. i., pp. 189 ff. (D. C. Simpson), 296 (Box), vol. ii., pp. 715 ff. (J. Rendel Harris, F. C. Lewis, F. C. Conybeare).

[2] Professor D. C. Margoliouth (*Expository Times*, vol. xxxi., p. 329) declares that the Aramaic version, along with its companions of the Sachau papyrus, is a forgery of our own century. But in such scepticism he is almost alone.

certain points discredits the later versions, there are other points in which it accredits even the youngest of them' (op. cit., vol. ii., p. 720). Even the later versions should not be treated lightly in seeking to recover the original work. Yet the doubt must remain when comparing Ecclesiastes with these, as to whether the maxims are additions to the original draft, and in origin later than the period of the biblical author.

(*a*) The Aramaic papyrus shows a few similarities. (1) In x. 20, Koheleth warns against cursing the king and the powerful, lest a bird of the air should report it. That is, informers are everywhere; the very walls have ears. In vii. 96 ff., Ahikar warns against chattering 'overmuch till thou reveal [every wo]rd [which] comes into thy mind, for in every place are their [eyes] and ears. . . . Watch carefully over thy mouth, and [over] what [thou] he[ar]est make thy heart hard [or slow], for a word spoken is like a bird, and he who utters it is like a man without . . .' The section in Ahikar, as in Koheleth, refers to the king. The figure of a bird as messenger, however, is ancient and common. Though the point of the simile is different in the two authors, yet in both it is applied to carelessness in speech against those in power. (2) As to the king, Koheleth knows that there is no escape from his exactions and oppression (v. 8), and warns against disobeying his command and entering into opposition to him: 'Be not hasty to go out of his presence; persist not in an evil thing, for he doeth whatsoever pleaseth him. Because the king's word hath power; and who may say to him, What doest thou?' (viii. 1–4). 'If the spirit of the ruler rise against thee, leave not thy place (or lose not thy self-possession); for composure quiets great offences' (x. 4). In vii. 100 ff., Ahikar has similar advice: 'Suppress not the word of a king.' 'Do thou take heed to thyself. Let him not show it [i.e. anger] at thy words, that thou go away before thy time. [In presence] of a king, if a thing is commanded thee, it is a burning fire; hasten, do it. . . . A king . . .

even his voice is high, who is he that can stand before him, except one who is like [?] him ? ' (3) Just as the Jew warns against being over-wise (vii. 16), Ahikar warns against being over-crafty as well as over-sweet and over-bitter (x. 146 ff. ; and Armenian version ii. 8).

(*b*) In the later versions are a few others : (1) Both condemn boastful assertions as to the unknown future (Eccles. x. 12 f. and Ahikar ii. 32 [Armenian]). (2) ' He that diggeth a pit shall fall into it ' (x. 8). Cf. ' He who digs a pit for his brother shall fall into it ' (Arabic viii. 38 ; cf. Syriac viii. 41 ; Armenian viii. 27). (3) To Koheleth it is a dreadful thing to have no burial (vi. 3). So, too, Ahikar (i. 4 Syriac, and other versions). (4) Ahikar complains (Syriac i. 4; Arabian i. 5 ; Armenian i. 4) that men will say of him that he has no son to bury him, no daughter to bewail him ; that his possessions, as though he were accursed, no man inherits. Not even if a son should spend ten talents in the last day would he exhaust his wealth. With this compare Eccles. iv. 8 as to the wealthy man without son or brother, ' yet there is no end of all his labour, neither are his eyes satisfied with riches. For whom (saith he) am I labouring, and depriving myself of good ? ' (5) Note Ahikar : ' A living fox is better than a dead lion ' (Arabian ii. 49) ; ' A living dog is better than a dead poor man ' (Arabian ii. 51). Cf. Koheleth : ' A living dog is better than a dead lion ' (ix. 4). (6) Compare Ecclesiastes (vii. 1) : ' A good name is better than precious ointment,'[1] with Ahikar, who says that ' Better is a good name than much beauty ' (Syriac A ii. 49 ; cf. Arabian ii. 7, 47 ; Armenian ii. 50). (7) Ahikar writes : ' The man that hath no rest, his death were better than his life ; and the sound of weeping were better than the sound of singing ; for

[1] Dr. W. E. Barnes (*Journal of Theological Studies*, January 1926, p. 205), however, eliminates the reference to a ' good ' name, and paraphrases : ' An epitaph is better than swaddling clothes,' making a suitable parallel to the next clause.

sorrow and weeping, if the fear of God be in them, are better than the sound of singing and rejoicing' (Arabian ii. 48) ; ' Better is the voice of wailing in the ears of a fool than music and joy ' (Syriac A ii. 50) ; ' Quit not the scene of mourning and repair unto the wedding ; for death lies ahead of all, and the punishment is great ' (Armenian ii. 25). Dr. Rendel Harris thinks the Syriac a contradiction of the sentiments of Koheleth in vii. 1–2 : ' The day of death [is better] than the day of one's birth. It is better to go to the house of mourning, than to go to the house of feasting ; for that is the end of all men ; and the living will lay it to heart.' Note, further, verses 3 f. : ' Sorrow is better than laughter ; for by the sadness of the countenance the heart is made glad. The heart of the wise is in the house of mourning, but the heart of fools is in the house of mirth.' Mark, too, in Koheleth (vi. 3, 6), it is the man whose life hath no good, no rest, to whom non-existence is better. (8) Ahikar has : ' The eye of man is like a fountain of water, and it is not satisfied with riches until filled with dust ' (Syriac A ii. 66 ; cf. Syriac B ii. 6 ; Armenian ii. 81). Note Koheleth in iv. 8 : ' Neither are his eyes satisfied with riches.' (9) Ecclesiastes x. 15 : ' The labour of fools wearieth every one of them, for he knoweth not how to go to the city.' Cf. Ahikar, Syriac A ii. 48 : ' The blind of eye straightway learneth the road and walketh in it, but the blind of heart leaveth the right way and goeth into the desert ' (cf. Arabian ii. 44 ; Armenian ii. 51).

The present writer has shown the probability (see later) that Koheleth, in searching for suitable aphorisms moved in circles of people whose minds were stored with the wisdom utterances of such Greek Sages as Theognis. Now, it is clear that amongst the Greeks, and also in Palestine, the work of Ahikar was well known ; hence it is extremely probable that in these same circles his words had passed into common speech. May not Koheleth exhibit some traces of them ? The possibility must be granted as far as the version

preserved in the Aramaic is concerned, which is the only one certainly pre-Kohelethean. In (*a*) (1) and (2) echoes of one may be preserved in the other. More than that cannot be said ; for such advice and such a simile could arise altogether independently. A similar conclusion should be drawn from the parallels to the later versions noted in (*b*). If it were assured that these aphorisms were of earlier date than Ecclesiastes, it is not unlikely that the biblical book preserves echoes of the language and thought, though there is the possibility of both being indebted to a common stock of popular wisdom. If Koheleth wrote first, then there is the same possibility of the parallels being due to both using common material, or these later versions echo his opinions. Note especially (*b*) (7). There the Armenian and Arabic versions agree with Koheleth, but the Syriac, as Rendel Harris points out, seems intended to be a contradiction of his sentiments.

D. Greek Literature

Passing by the view of Dr. Dillon[1] that Koheleth was indebted to Buddhism as unacceptable by reason of the paucity of evidence offered (so McNeile, Barton, Lukyn Williams), the oft-made suggestions of Greek influence must now be considered.

(1) *The Philosophers*[2]

Some scholars think that Koheleth was a native Hebrew philosopher, and that everything in his book can be explained as a natural development of Semitic and Hebrew thought. Any similarities of thought in non-Jewish writers are not due to immediate influence but to parallel, though independent, courses of evolution in thought. So Renan, Jülicher, A. B.

[1] *Sceptics of the Old Testament.*

[2] Commentaries by Plumptre (pp. 30 ff.), Barton (pp. 32 ff.), Lukyn Williams (pp. xxx. ff.) ; McNeile's *Introduction to Ecclesiastes* (pp. 39 ff.) ; Tyler's *Ecclesiastes* (pp. 8 ff., 37 ff.) ; Cheyne's *Job and Solomon* (pp. 260 ff.) ; Fairweather's *Jesus and the Greeks* (pp. 88 f.) ; Hastings' *D. B.* i. 639 (Peake) ; *Enc. Biblica*, pp. 1160, 1162 (A. B. Davidson), 2010 (Jülicher).

Davidson, Cheyne, McNeile, &c. Lukyn Williams adopts a somewhat similar attitude, but suggests that Koheleth, if he knew Greek, must have learnt something of the philosophic thought of Greece. Its phrases were current coin, but he was not greatly interested. On the other hand, Tyler, Plumptre, Siegfried, Haupt, &c., find unmistakable traces of the Stoic and Epicurean philosophies; while Driver, Peake, Wellhausen, Kuenan, Grieve, &c., think that he was more or less influenced by an atmosphere of Greek thought, though never adopting the views of any particular school.

The critics who think the book betrays the marks of Greek ideas have, as a rule, thought of the contemporaneous—or nearly so—philosophy of the higher schools. Tyler and Fairweather are sure that in ii. 3 is reflected ARISTOTLE's conception of the Chief Good (*Nicomachean Ethics*, I. vii. 15). The former also gives vii. 27 and xii. 13 as suggested by the Aristotelian inductive method, and its universal law. E. Pfleiderer is alone, except for J. P. Mahaffy, in tracing in iii. 1–9 the influence of the 'universal flux' of HERACLEITUS. McNeile thinks that affinity exists between XENOPHANES of Colophon and Koheleth in such passages as iii. 20, 21; vi. 12; vii. 23 ff.; viii. 17. In the Greek is the same pessimism and sense of the futility of things, the same sense of ignorance and despair at arriving at wisdom, and the same colourless monotheism. In his *Ecclesiastes and the Early Greek Wisdom Literature* (pp. 102 ff.) the present writer has shown that Xenophanes is not a pessimist, that his scepticism is altogether different from that of the Jew, and that the two are fundamentally different in spirit and outlook. McNeile also compares the teaching of PYRRHO and the SCEPTICS. Like them Koheleth believed in the impossibility of real knowledge (i. 17 f.; ii. 13–15; iii. 11; vii. 14, 23–4, 25–28, xi. 5), and that the judgement should be withheld (viii. 17; ii. 19; iii. 21, 22*b*; vi. 12; viii. 7, x. 14). Yet, as Williams well says: 'The

two differed *toto caelo* in character and practical ethics'; and McNeile himself admits that of the Pyrrhonic imperturbability—the absolute calmness, free from passion and desire—there is no trace in Koheleth.

The influence of the STOICS is advocated by Tyler, Plumptre, Fairweather, Haupt, Siegfried, &c. Thus in iii. 1–9, 'the catalogue of times and seasons' is the Stoic principle of living conformably to nature. In chapter i. and iii. 15 is the Stoic idea of recurring cycles of history; in vii. 14 the Stoic conception of evil as the necessary accompaniment of good; in i. 17, ii. 12, vii. 25, and ix. 3, as among the Stoics, folly is madness. The fatalism of ix. 11 f., viii. 8, &c., is of the Stoics, and so also is the thought found everywhere of the vanity and nothingness of life and its striving. The same scholars believe that some of the ideas of the EPICUREANS have also been incorporated. For example, in iii. 18–22 the denial that man is better than the beasts and of immortality; and in ii. 24, iii. 12, 22, v. 18 f., &c., the exhortation to present enjoyment, are Epicurean. So also in v. 18–20 is the Epicurean ἀταραξία, or tranquil felicity. Haupt and Plumptre record other cases of alleged similarity. Sellin (p. 229) and Mahaffy (*Greek Life and Thought*, p. 484) think that the book contains a sort of eclectic philosophy, a mere cento of inconsistent views, Epicurean, Stoic, and Heraclitic philosophies being all confusedly intermingled.

In reply, it is to be said that Koheleth was not at all a philosopher in the technical sense of the Greek schools. Not a trace can be found of the scholastic terminology. Many of the parallels alleged have been shown to be forced, and with authorities of late date such as Marcus Aurelius. Fundamental differences between his teachings and those of the philosophers are easily discoverable, and any similarities are due to parallel courses of the evolution of thought, or to the fact that philosophic phrases had become

common coin, and thus the resemblances are merely superficial. The work of Koheleth nowhere professes to be a doctrine of philosophy in the usual sense of the word. What he sets forth are the results, not of deep abstract thought, but of personal experience and observation, and of careful search among others for opinions which harmonized with his own findings.

(2) *The Early Gnomic Writers*

It seems to the present writer that xii. 9 f. (whether written by Koheleth himself, or, as Williams thinks, by a friend and pupil who well knew his method of working) give the right point of view from which the book should be studied. Since Koheleth 'tested, and sought out, and set in order many proverbs,' shall we not get better results by examining the popular gnomic thought rather than the monuments of scholastic philosophy? Is it probable that a collector of proverbs would pass by the common aphoristic thought for the abstract wisdom of the higher philosophers? My own theory[1] is that Koheleth is indebted to certain of the early Greek writers, especially the gnomic poet Theognis.

(*a*) In Archilochus (*c.* 710–670 B.C.), Fr. 62, is a fine exhortation to endure ills bravely and prosperity not too exultantly, continuing: 'But rejoice in what is joyful, and be not overvexed at evil, and recognize what a balance our life maintains.' Cf. Eccles. vii. 14: 'In the day of prosperity be in prosperity, and in the day of adversity consider (or 'look upon [adversity]'); God hath made even this [good] side by side with that [evil].' That is, when all is well, take and enjoy the happiness given; when misfortune comes, bear it bravely; prosperity and adversity correspond; one balances the other. Koheleth adds a reason for the balancing; otherwise the similarity is striking.

[1] More fully presented in my *Ecclesiastes and the Early Greek Wisdom Literature*. I have seen, so far, no adverse criticism; while among the Old Testament scholars who have expressed their approval are Professors D. S. Margoliouth, J. E. McFadyen, G. A. Barton, T. J. Meek, T. H. Robinson, G. H. Box, and N. H. Baynes.

Other parallels are more general, and the same is to be said of the remaining early lyric poets whose works have been examined ; though it is interesting to note that the famous eulogy on Scopas of Thessaly by SIMONIDES OF CEOS (556–468 B.C.) contains several thoughts also found in one chapter of Koheleth (vii. 7, 16–8, 20, 28) : the difficulty of finding the truly good man and of being good ; adversity demoralizes character ; the praise of the moderate spirit.

(*b*) The gnomic poets are more important for our purpose. According to the orator Isocrates (436–338 B.C.), in his own day, Hesiod, Theognis, and Phokylides were recognized as outstanding teachers of practical morality (*Ad Nicoclen*, 43), and the works of these Sages call for examination.

(1) In the certainly genuine work of the last-named there are no likenesses, but in the so-called PSEUDO-PHOKYLIDEA are some important similarities, and, besides these, more general likenesses in thought of which no further note is taken here. Line 98 is : 'In thy religion keep the mean (*μέτρα δὲ τεῦχε θεοισι*) due measure is best.' Cf. Eccles. vii. 16 : 'Be not righteous overmuch,' &c. In 106–8 we have : 'The spirit is the likeness of God and His loan to mortals. The body we have from earth ; and then, again dissolving into earth, we are dust, but the air again receives the spirit.' Gen. i. 27, ii. 7 ; Job xxxiv. 14 should be compared, and the idea is also Greek. Yet note Eccles. xii. 7 : 'The dust shall return to the earth as it was, and the spirit shall return to God who gave it.' With Koheleth, in chapter i. and iii. 15 compare 27 : 'Suffering is common to all ; life is a wheel ; happiness is unstable.' In Koheleth, wisdom is better than the strength of warrior and weapons of war (ix. 16, xviii.) ; in the Phokylidea, reason is a weapon sharper than the sword (124), and the wise man better than the valiant warrior (130). In the contexts of both (ix. 17, 122 f., the noisy windbag is condemned and well-ordered speech praised. Is ix. 18*b*—'but one sinner destroyeth

much good '—a gloss? Haupt thinks so; but note in the Greek book the next verses (132–4) have the thought: 'Let the good separate from the sinners lest they be destroyed with them.' Cf. 152: 'Do not benefit a base man; it is equal to sowing the sea,' with the same figure, though contradictory advice of x. 1: 'Cast thy bread upon the waters; for thou shalt find it after many days.'

The evidence seems to point to some connexion between the two writings. Certain other features in the Phokylidea strongly suggest acquaintance with the Old Testament, and the writer is usually thought to be an Alexandrian Jew. Is, then, our biblical book also the source of the references in the Greek? This is doubtful. If the Greek writer was of the school which approved of Ecclesiastes as a canonical book, why does he contradict it in the 'sowing the sea' passage? If he rejected its scriptural authority, it is strange to find him using in 106–8 a passage (xii. 7) which, according to the Book of Wisdom (ii. 1–3), contained opinions regarded as distinctly ungodly by other opponents of the claim to such authority.

The dates given range from 150 B.C. to the middle of the first century A.D. The present writer suggests that the author did more than merely borrow the name of Phokylides for his book. Genuine sayings of the early period were current under the name of the famous sage, and were, indeed, part of the common stock of popular morality sayings. Some of these have found their way into the collection made by Koheleth. From the same common stock the author of the Phokylidea also drew a supply at a later time. This will account for the likenesses between the two books. But the whole question is obscure, and there is room for a thoroughly scientific investigation of the relationship of the Phokylidea to the biblical books.

(2) More can be said for a relationship to HESIOD, whose date is variously given from 850 to 700 B.C. Only the briefest summary can here be given of the

evidence offered in my treatise. To begin, note Eccles. iv. 4–6 and the difficulties the commentators have in fixing the meaning and connexion, some scholars even cutting out verse 5 as a gloss. Yet the most probable interpretations prove an excellent aphoristic summary of lines 11–41 of the 'Works and Days': Eccles. iv. 4 = 'Works and Days,' 11 ff.: All skilful work, is the result of rivalry; iv. 5 = 27–36: The idle fool brings ruin upon himself; iv. 6 = 37–41: Better the modest portion with contentment than wealth with care and sorrow. Is it merely accidental that three consecutive but apparently isolated proverbs in Ecclesiastes should sum up consecutive paragraphs in Hesiod? Yet mark that in one point Hesiod is contradicted in Koheleth's usual sweeping manner: Toil and the arts spring out of rivalry, but even this is vanity.

In Koheleth, woman (as a whole, not merely the class mentioned in Prov. ii. and vii.) is 'more bitter than death, even a woman who is snares, and nets are her heart, and her hands fetters' (vii. 26). The next words are cut out by Barton and McNeile as a gloss: 'He that is good before God shall escape from her, but a sinner shall be caught by her.' Yet compare the Theogony (589–91) and the 'Works and Days' (83) where woman is a creature 'deadly, a sheer snare from which there is no escape for men' (ὀλώιον. δόλον ἀιπύν, ἀμή χανον ἀνθρώποισιν). Compare Eccles. vi. 9: 'Better is the sight of the eyes than the wandering of the soul' with the 'Works and Days': 'It is a good thing to draw on what you have, but a vexation to the soul to crave what is absent' (367 f.). With the times and seasons of iii. 1 ff. note Hesiod's list of days for certain activities ('Works and Days,' 765 ff.). As in Koheleth, they are divinely appointed (765, 769). The list forms, as Paley[1] saw, the fitting conclusion to the section which ends in 694: 'The fitting time is best in all things'; and also, like Koheleth (iii. 11), man's ignorance of the right time is emphasized (769, 768,

[1] *The Epics of Hesiod*, p. 96.

824, 826 f., 484 in 'Works and Days'; cf. Fr. 177). In his protest that the former days were not better than these (vii. 10), may it be not the Jew in Koheleth, for once uppermost, objecting to Hesiod's account of the various ages of mankind (gold, silver, &c.), and its underlying doctrine of the progressive deterioration of mankind? With Koheleth's 'Who is able to straighten out what He [God] hath made crooked?' (vii. 13); 'The crooked cannot be made straight' (i. 15), compare the 'Works and Days' (7): 'Easily He [Zeus] straightens the crooked.'

Other parallels may easily be discovered, and are brought forward in the book already mentioned. On both men the problem of human suffering weighed heavily, and both were convinced of injustice in the divine government of the world. Yet it is not provable that Koheleth had *read* Hesiod. If so, he must have been working from memory, or surely far more traces of connexion would have been found. Remembering that the first parallel noted ('Works and Days,' 11–41 = Eccles. iv. 4–6) was famous in antiquity, and so would be common property, and that other Hesiodian thoughts and expressions had passed into common use, it seems best to think of Koheleth working in circles in which the maxims of the early popular moralist were current, and gathering thoughts and expression which have found their way, with other material, into his own book. If so, in at least two cases, the knife of the critic is shown to have been unnecessary.

(3) Still more can be said for a relationship between Koheleth and the works passing under the name of the gnomic poet Theognis (*c.* 520 B.C.). For long he was the standard author in Greek schools and the rising generations were taught his precepts. Even if the book is a later compilation, it existed as such before the time of the Jew. The view expounded in my treatise, to which the reader is referred for fuller information, is that the atmosphere of the work of Koheleth is typically Greek; yet not that of the great

schools of speculative philosophy, but rather that of circles in which the maxims collected under the name of Theognis were in common currency. It is not suggested that Koheleth wrote with the work of Theognis before him. Against this the general difference in order and certain omissions seem decisive. The conclusion is that Koheleth, working (xii. 9 f.) among people to whom the thoughts of Theognis were common property, gathered much material which proves to be from the work of the Greek Sage. But such collecting and presentation were not haphazard, but due to the matter gathered harmonizing with his own pessimistic conclusions.

(1) Notice, first, that both books are very similar in that the opinions and meditations on life, religion, and society lack order and progress. Coherent and systematic arrangement is absent. Isolated observations abound. The arguments are little developed. Both have seemed to scholars heaps of *disjecta membra*. Subjects change rapidly and unexpectedly, and inconsistencies of thought appear. The history of interpretation reveals similar differing theories applied to both books : dislocation of material ; wholesale interpolation by later editors ; the books have been gradually built up by various Sages of varying periods ; the books are collections of Sages of different periods brought together without inner unity or plan ; both books are substantially the same as when they left the hand of Koheleth and Theognis, &c. (2) A large part of the thought of Koheleth is paralleled in Theognis. It must be granted that some of the ideas are not peculiar to these Sages : for they are the commonplaces of writers of many places and ages. Similar environment and circumstances readily beget similar ideas in certain types of mind. But, granting this, it is still significant that so much of Koheleth should be found in the collection of Theognis. (3) Moreover, if connexion is assumed as a working hypothesis, some difficult passages in Ecclesiastes are

cleared up; phrases and sentences suspected to be interpolations, or of doubtful and hard interpretation, have light thrown upon them. (4) While a general difference in the order of the material in the two books discredits any notion of Koheleth's having Theognis before him as he wrote, yet occasionally corresponding sequences of like thoughts can be detected, some of these consisting of apparently isolated aphorisms. This suggests that the informants of Koheleth, quoting or giving the substance of the Theognian aphorisms, now and again followed the same order as their source when supplying the collector with material, and this order he preserved. (5) Sometimes the resemblances are not merely in thought, but in language and phraseology, some of the instances being striking.

In substantiation of these statements, a few of the points made in the book named are here mentioned. (1) The methods of both writers are said to be similar. 'It is meet that the servant and messenger of the Muses, if he has any signal knowledge of wisdom [εἰ τι περισσὸν εἰδείη σοφίης], should not begrudge it; no, some things he must seek [μῶσθαι], some he must present [δεικνύναι], and others make [ποιεῖν]; to what profit is his sole knowledge.' Such is the view of the Greek with respect to his office (769 ff.). So also Koheleth in xii. 9: 'And, because Koheleth was singularly wise[1], he taught the people knowledge; yea he tested [אזן], and sought out [חקר], and set in order [תקן] many proverbs. Koheleth sought to find words of fact, and he wrote uprightly words of truth.' The likenesses are noteworthy, and Professor D. S. Margoliouth thinks the uncommon Hebrew of Koheleth of foreign origin. (2) In 687 f., Theognis has: ''Tis not for mortals to fight with Immortals nor to argue [with them]; to no one this is right.' Koheleth gives: 'He [man] is not able to contend with Him that is mightier than he.' Both use the language of a cause-at-law

[1] For justification see op. cit., p. 16.

[οὐκ ἔστι δίκην εἰπεῖν . . . πρός; וְלֹא־יוּכַל לָדִין עִם] The identity of phrase is striking; one may not enter into a dispute with deity. (3) Scholars in increasing number are reading in iii. 11: עֶלֶם instead of עֹלָם, i.e. 'ignorance' instead of the difficult 'world,' 'eternity,' 'knowledge,' 'future,' &c. 'He [God] has put ignorance in man's heart, so that he cannot find out the work that God does from beginning to end.' This rendering, harmonizing with Koheleth's thought elsewhere (vi. 12, vii. 14, i. 2–11, &c.), is made practically certain by the number of passages in Theognis of similar purport: 'No man toils, knowing within his heart whether the issue be good or ill. . . . Our thoughts are vain; we know nothing. The gods accomplish all things according to their own mind, (135 ff., cf. 381 f., 1075 f., 585 f., 159 f.). (4) Taking גְּבֹהִים in v. 8 as a plural majestatis referring to God as the Most High, above other high ones, who in the end punishes oppression, carries one back to Theognis 202: A man may take above what is just and seem to prosper, but in the end ill ensues, 'for the mind of the gods is wont to be above'—that is, to prevail (ὑπερέσχε). (5) The statement in Ecclesiastes (iv. 17 [v. 1]), so perplexing to commentators, that fools 'do not know how to do evil'—such being the natural meaning of the Hebrew—invites comparison with 1051, where the Greek writes: 'Never do any evil hastily, but deliberate in the deeps of your heart and with a sound mind.' (6) Thinking of life and death, Koheleth writes: 'The light is sweet, and it is good for the eyes to see the sun' (xi. 7), and so Theognis: 'I shall leave the lovely light of the sun' (569). (7) 'Of all things to men on earth it is best not to be born, nor to see the beams of the piercing sun; but, once born, as swiftly as may be to pass the gates of Hades and lie under a heavy heap of earth' (Theognis 525 ff.). Cf. Koheleth iv. 2 ff.: 'And I congratulated the dead who have already died more than the living that are yet alive, and [I regarded] as happier than both of

them him who had never been born, who has not seen the evil work that is done under the sun.' It is, however, a common Greek thought ; and for the Old Testament compare Jer. xx. 14 ff. and Job iii. 2 ff. (8) The strange טוֹב אֲשֶׁר־יָפֶה of v. 18 : 'an agreeable thing which is fair,' in a context in which the *carpe* doctrine is commended, is paralleled by a phrase in a similar context which Theognis (1019) adapted from Mimnermus : τερπνὸν ὁμῶς καὶ καλόν. The phrase that the Greek applies to the flower of youth the Hebrew applies to the enjoyments most characteristic of those in the flower of life (cf. xi. 9 ff.). (9) ' Never utter a big word [ἔπος μέγα] ; for no one knows what a night or day brings to a man ' (159 f.). So Theognis. Compare Koheleth x. 14 : ' The fool makes great [his] words [וַיַּרְבֶּה דְּבָרִים], yet man knows not that which shall be ; and what shall be after him who can tell him ? ' The parallel shows that Barton and McNeile needlessly cut out the second half of the verse as a misplaced fragment. (10) ' Whoso thinks,' writes Theognis, ' his neighbour knows nothing, but that he only understands subtle matters, he is without sense, deprived of a sound mind ' (221 f. ; ἄφρων ἐστί, νόου βεβλαμμένος ἐσθλοῦ). So also Koheleth : ' Yea, also, when the fool walks in the way, his sense is lacking [לִבּוֹ חָסֵר], and he says concerning every one, He is a fool ' (x. 3). These examples must here suffice.

In thought there are many other similarities, for which the work named enters into fuller detail. These may be mentioned here : Man is completely dependent on deity for all things good or bad. Deity is arbitrary and resistless Power, and has withheld from man the knowledge how to order his life prosperously. Good men are unjustly treated by God, and the wicked prosper ; yet, somewhat inconsistently, both teach elsewhere that wickedness is punished. Delay in the operations of divine justice leads men to think they can transgress with impunity. No idea of retribution

or redress after this life ; God is not righteous, yet neither writer is tempted to atheism, for both commend reverence to Him. All human undertakings are chanceful, yet there is no blind chance, for all depends upon the divine will. Rewards do not follow merit and skill. Both Jew and Greek are pessimists ; they longed for death as better than life, yet also found death a dreadful thing, and clung to life. Both advise their readers to get, while young, all the joy out of life that comes their way—*carpe diem.* Old age is hateful. Only the living may wait on hope. To err is human ; few men or none are really good. The unworthy are elevated and the noble degraded. Keep the oath sworn before God with respect to the king. A true friend is of value ; ingratitude is common ; wine is good, wisely used. Both write of a time in which actions should be performed, and both complain of deity so acting that one cannot be sure that he knows the proper time. Both commend a life that keeps the mean, following the ' nothing-in-excess ' doctrine ; wisdom is praised and coupled with wealth ; affliction sifts good from bad ; troubles are to be bravely faced ; anger is unwisdom. Both praise or blame good and bad speech, and advise that peace be kept by yielding to circumstances. Both mark the insatiability of avarice, the changeability of fortune, that no man takes his money with him when he dies, that it rules the world, yet far better is a moderate portion with quietness than wealth with harm. Both find something of more value than wealth, warn against inordinate desire, appreciate the virtues of a good wife, lash out against women in general, and use the phrase ' under the sun ' in utterances similarly shot through with melancholy.

The conclusions already outlined seem to be the best explanation of the facts. One cannot avoid the opinion that some connexion exists between the two writings. Koheleth was a collector of aphorisms. Many of those had their source in the Theognian collection.

VI. Integrity and Theories of Composition

A few scholars, among whom is Cornill, argue for our book in its present form as entirely from the hand of Koheleth, but the majority of scholars recognize the presence of later glosses and interpolations. My own view, sometimes based upon, or strengthened by, the fact that some of the passages regarded by critics as intrusions into the text can be found in his sources, and also because in a collection of aphoristic utterances on life, society, and religion inconsistent opinions can be expected, is that the only certainly later additions are iii. 17, xi. 9*c*., xii. 13–14, xii. 1*a*. If the first two passages, with xii. 14, refer, as is very probable, to life after death, the contradiction with iii. 19–21 and ix. 5, 6, 10 is too strong for any other opinion. Chapter xii. 1*a*: 'And remember thy Creator in the days of thy youth,' are words which break the connexion and certainly do not harmonize with the context. Chapter xii. 13 goes with xii. 14, and, moreover, while the fear of God is recommended in some other passages, the author himself, whose main doctrine is that all is vanity and a striving after wind, and whose practical philosophy was that of *carpe diem*, could hardly have written that the sentiments of verses 13 f. were the conclusion and summing-up of the matter.

The views of scholars on the unity and compilation of the present form of the book may be briefly summarized. All recognize the presence of contradictions, inconsistencies, and abrupt transitions of thought. To what are these due? (1) Some (Zöckler, Briggs, Cornill, Plumptre, Genung, &c.) who accept the entire, or almost entire, unity find the explanation in the thought of changing moods within Koheleth. He presents his disjointed musings, the inward strife of baser and truer self, the alternations of doubt and religious faith, and the final victory of faith. (2) Tyler, also maintaining the unity, thinks the book reflects the opposite-sided discussions of certain Jewish

religious schools through which Greek philosophy was introduced among the Jews. (3) Others (Herder, Yeard, Eichhorn, Kuenan) think that Koheleth is presenting a dialogue between himself and a sensual worldling, or between a gloomy and doubting hypercritic and a teacher bringing him back to sound views. Wrong opinions are presented only to be refuted. (4) G. Bickell thus explains the absence of orderly arrangement : By a series of accidents the leaves of the original work, which was not in a roll, but in book form, became displaced, and were afterwards put together by an editor who proved himself ignorant of the true order. Though MSS. in book form seem not to have been in use until the second century A.D., and consequently it is improbable that Koheleth did exist in that form, Lukyn Williams rightly suggests that, since the works of Hippocrates were copied on separate sheets of papyrus in the second century B.C., there is no reason why Koheleth should not have done the same with his notes or excerpts. Nevertheless, the scheme involves so many violent alterations and transpositions as to render it altogether improbable. It supposes that even before the leaves had been displaced a hostile reader had made some alterations, and that after the dislocations two other editors had been at work. (5) It has been thought (e.g. by Lukyn Williams) that the lack of order is due to Koheleth recording his thoughts unsystematically, but dying before he could carry out his intention of properly arranging them. A pupil made a few additions (i. 1–2, iii. 17, viii. 11–13, xi. 9*b*, xii. 1*a*, 9–14) to bring out what he thought to be his master's belief. Long before this, Cheyne had suggested that chapters iii.–xii. had been compiled from loose notes found after the author's death. Still others (Martin) think of a pupil's reminiscences of a master's teaching with later additions. (6) Similar to the position taken at the beginning of this section is that of A. B. Davidson, Peake, and Williams. Our book does not contain many glosses or

interpolations, and logical inconsistency, unless it it be very glaring, is not at all unexpected in such a writing as that of Koheleth. To iii. 17, xi. 9*c*, xii. 1*a*, 13–14, are variously added i. 1–2, iii. 21, vii. 19, viii. 11–13, and xii. 7*b*. i. 1–2, or better i. 1, may be editorial. iii. 21, rejected by Williams, is not really contrary to the spirit of Koheleth with his 'who knoweth?' (cf. ii. 19, vi. 12; also iii. 22, viii. 7, x. 14). vii. 19 does interrupt the connexion, and may be a gloss, but more likely it is a misplaced fragment of Koheleth (cf. vii. 12). viii. 11–13 has a parallel in Theognis 203 ff. which also speaks of the divine delay in dealing out justice as leading the wrongdoer to think he can transgress with impunity. xii. 9–12 seem to be Koheleth's own words commending in the third person his book and giving an indication as to his methods. Verses 9 f. are the equivalent of lines 769 ff. in Theognis already mentioned. The self-praise should be no reason for the rejection of these verses when i. 16, ii. 3, 15 are remembered; and, as Driver says, the tone and strain is that of the book generally (with 12*b* cf. i. 18).

(7) Many scholars find none of these explanations satisfactory. They hold that the inconsistencies are too pronounced and the contrasts too abrupt for any theory of complete or even substantial unity, and any 'two voices,' 'varying moods,' or 'contending opinions' theories. They find different strata, or extensive interpolations, the writer of each using, revising, enlarging the material left by his predecessors. (*a*) Siegfried[1] finds that at least nine different hands have been at work. These are: Q 1, with a very un-Hebraic pessimistic philosophy and influenced by Stoicism. His work was glossed by Q 2, an Epicurean Sadducee. Then Q 3, a *chakam*, or wise man, adds a defence of wisdom against Q 1. A Jewish *chasid*, or pious man, Q 4, in the interests of orthodoxy, corrects the anti-Jewish views already expressed. Q 5 denotes

[1] *D. B.* iv. 927 for a handy summary.

many persons who added scattered interpolations, inculcating practical wisdom. Then a redactor, R 1, put together i. 2–xii. 7, and added i. 1, xii. 8. E 1 added xii. 9 f. ; E 2, xii. 11 f., and the final redactor, R 2, a Pharisee, added xii. 13 f. Q 1 lived just after 200 B.C., and the alterations were being made until about 100 B.C. (*b*) P. Haupt thinks that the original Koheleth was a Sadducean physician in Jerusalem writing, when an old man, about 100 B.C. About half our present book belongs to him. This material he left without a final revision, and it contained variants and parallels. The editorial activity of friends after his death, and interpolations by Pharisees in the interests of orthodoxy, wrought still more confusion to the text. Haupt radically rearranges the book in the light of a metrical theory of his own, as well as subjective considerations as to the original connecting-links.

(*c*) Both the above theories are altogether too ingenious and arbitrary. Much more reasonable is the explanation of McNeile,[1] which, apart from a few particulars, is that of Barton and Podechard. Writing about 200 B.C., Koheleth was a member of an unorthodox section of the community. A pessimist as to Providence and life in general, the only course that seemed open to him was *carpe diem*—make the most of the present. A friend edited his work, adding i. 1–2 and xii. 8–10. Then two contemporary writers, within the next ten years, interpolated it. One was a *chakam*, or wise man, who, somewhat attracted by the book, sought to improve it by adding more or less isolated proverbs culled from various sources (iv. 5, 9–12 ; vi. 7, 9*a* ; vii. 1*a*, 4–12, 19 ; viii. 1, ix. 17–x. 3 ; x. 8–11, 12–14*a*, 15, 18 f., xii. 11 f.). The other was a *chasid*, or pious man, and, as an orthodox Jew repelled by Koheleth's attitude, added corrections on the duty of fearing God and the certainty of divine judgement on wrongdoing (ii. 26*a*, *b*, iii. 14*b*, 17,

[1] Op. cit., pp. 13 ff.

iv. 17–v. 6 [v. 1–7], vii. 18*b*, 26*b*, 29, viii. 2*b*, 3*a*, 5, 6*a*, 11–13, xi. 9*b*, xii. 1*a*, 13–14). A fourth hand finally added ii. 26 and vii. 6.

Serious difficulties prevent the acceptance of any theory of different strata or more or less extensive interpolating. Even against the less objectionable form of McNeile and Barton it is pertinent to ask if experience does not prove that widely different ideas may and do exist side by side in the same mind. These theories seem to deny this possibility; a writer may only think or express one kind of thought. Further, Lukyn Williams[1] has shown that the language and style of the supposedly different writers are the same throughout, and thus confirm the essential unity of authorship. Moreover, in Koheleth's sources can be found some parallels to passages rejected as of different origin. The whole question of excisions should be reconsidered in the light of the evidence for acquaintance with such matter as that of the Greek gnomic writers.

(8) Krochmal's improbable hypothesis, followed by Graetz, in the main, only deserves mentioning. Chapter xii. 11–12 (or 11–14) were added at the Synod of Jamnia (*c.* A.D. 100), not merely as a conclusion to Ecclesiastes, but to the whole of the Hagiographa, the third division of the Hebrew Canon. The warning against books in verse 12 is against accepting any other books into Sacred Scripture.

VII. Date and Place of Composition[2]

The data on which a conclusion has been drawn are usually given as follows: (1) The references to oppression, cruelty, perversion of justice, tyranny of officials (iii. 16, iv. 1 ff., v. 8, viii. 9); changes of condition, the result of a capricious despotism (x. 5 ff.; cf. viii. 2 ff.); it is a time of political, and perhaps revolutionary, confusion and anarchy (x. 7), unless

[1] Op. cit., pp. xx. ff.

[2] Driver's *Introduction*, pp. 473 ff.; *Enc. Biblica*, pp. 1161 f.; *Commentaries* of Wright (pp. 488 ff.), Delitzsch (pp. 190 ff.); Barton (pp. 22, 58 ff.), and Williams (pp. xiii. ff.).

these changes are due to the monarch ; espionage is common (x. 20). The king seems to have been a child, and the courtiers self-indulgent (x. 16 ff.). Thus the period is held to have been one of social disorder, unstable government, and submission to an alien power. (2) Allusions to contemporary history are found in iv. 13–16, vi. 3, viii. 10, ix. 13–15, x. 16 f. Too much weight must not be attached to these. The supposed references to contemporary events are altogether too vague to be identified ; indeed, one of them may possibly be traced to Theognis (ix. 13–16). The matters brought forward in (1) must not be unduly pressed, as similar expressions can be found in his sources. Neither can the pessimism and depression, and the lack of hope as to the future of the community (vi. 12), be too much relied upon as evidences of date. A similar spirit is found in his Greek sources, and is also discoverable, as we have seen, in much earlier Egyptian and Babylonian literature.

(3) Of more weight is the fact that the author of Ecclesiasticus (*c.* 180–175 B.C.) had our book before him, and therefore it cannot be of later date. (4) The problems of Koheleth are those prominent in later Judaism. His God is remote from men. The doctrine of personal immortality is rejected in such a definite fashion as to suggest the belief was known to be gaining ground among his contemporaries. The fear of God inculcated is cold, colourless, and uninspiring. The days of Israel's more sunny religion and trust seem to belong to the past. 'The religious spirit of Israel is seen to be completely exhausted' (A. B. Davidson). We are in the atmosphere of a later reflective wisdom battling with the most sombre problems. All this points to a late date for a Jewish writing. Although Professor W. E. Barnes advises caution in using the book as an authority, regarding it as giving the speculations of a recluse, such a book could hardly have been born within Israel until a late date. Koheleth, as already noted, did adapt foreign material

in his book ; but it must not be supposed he was merely giving out a collection of casual aphorisms collected in haphazard fashion. He gathered such as fitted with his own ways of thinking, which in a Jew of an early age would have been almost, if not quite, impossible. Moreover, he is reckoned among 'the Wise' (xii. 9–11)—a phrase not used in this technical sense until late.

(5) Most important of all is the evidence of the language and literary style. It stands by itself in the Old Testament. Some of the peculiar phrases can be accounted for by his Greek sources ; nevertheless, there are, besides, many affinities with the latest Hebrew, such as that of Chronicles-Ezra-Nehemiah (*c.* 300–250 B.C.), Esther (*c.* 300–150 B.C.), and it also contains features first found in the Mishnic Hebrew (*c.* A.D. 200). The Hebrew has undergone deterioration from the classical style, and Aramaisms abound. There are two Persian words (*pardes*, ii. 5 ; *pithgam*, viii. 11).[1] A late date must be accepted.

How late ? Many scholars (Ewald, Zöckler, Wright, Driver, &c.) think that the data, especially (1), and the spirit of depression and questioning, point to the later years of the Persian period, which lasted from 538–332 B.C., and, indeed, to the writer as not far from being a contemporary of Malachi, with whose book there are points of contact in tone and language. Mark, too, the Persian words, and the suggestion of the satrapial system in v. 8. If, as some believe, Greek words can be definitely found in Koheleth, this does not point certainly to the Greek period ; for Williams has called attention to at least three Greek words in the Aramaic papyri of from 492 B.C. to 400 B.C. Most scholars (Noldeke, Plumptre, Tyler, Davidson, Peake, McNeile, Barton, Williams, &c.) place it in the Greek period. The present writer cannot give weight to the argument for this date based upon Koheleth's supposed acquaintance with the Greek classical philosophies,

[1] Barton, op. cit., pp. 52 f.

and further admits that the knowledge of the Theognian maxims might possibly point to an earlier period. Yet the language, the lack of national feeling, which seems broken and crushed, the absence of enthusiasm, and the whole religious attitude, strongly indicate the later date. The view of Graetz that the time must be that of Herod the Great (39–4 B.C.) is impossible, since the author of Ecclesiasticus had our book before him. The date is probably *c.* 200 B.C.—probably a little before rather than after. It was apparently written before patriotic sentiment was strongly to the fore in the years of the Maccabean conflict (170–164 B.C.), and also seems to reflect—though too much weight must not be given to this, inasmuch as Koheleth was often indebted to earlier sources—the time when the later Ptolemies and the Seleucids disputed and fought over Palestine, and oppressed it in turn.

As to *place of composition*, Sellin and others think of Alexandria. Some phrases (xi. 5, xii. 5, 6, 12) are held to point in this direction. Most, however, regard the references to the Temple, Jerusalem, sacrifices, vows, the use of the Hebrew language, as pointing to Jerusalem, or near it. The matter is not of importance. Probably Koheleth had been a traveller and it is possible that he had learnt his Greek proverbial philosophy outside Palestine. But in the Greek period this supposition, though likely, cannot be said to be absolutely necessary; for, from the fourth century B.C. onward, and especially after the conquests of Alexander the Great, there must have been many Palestinian Jews acquainted with the Greek language and thought.

VIII. The Author: His Personal Circumstances, Methods, and Aim[1]

While the meditations and opinions, by a literary

[1] Driver's *Introduction*, p. 470; *Enc. Biblica*, pp. 1155 f., 1160; *D. B.* i. 637 f.; *Commentaries* of Wright (pp. 79 ff.), Plumptre (pp. 19 ff.), Barton (pp. 18 ff.), Williams (pp. xxxv. f., xlvi. ff.), and McNeile, op. cit. (pp. 8 f.).

device not unknown elsewhere in Jewish and other literatures, are placed in the mouth of King Solomon, he was not the author. As Cheyne thinks, modesty may have been one reason for the author's adoption of the king's name, but this is not probable in view of the self-praise of some of the verses. More likely the name was chosen because Solomon was reputed the founder of the Wise Men and the greatest of them, as well as famed for wealth, magnificence, and voluptuousness ; and hence a very fitting vehicle to set forth the results of experience and observation.

That he cannot have been the author—a conclusion first boldly stated by Luther, who thought it ' composed by Sirach in the time of the Maccabees '—is clear (1) from the date assigned. Apart from this sufficient objection there are others : (2) Can the Solomon who countenanced oppression have so satirized himself by exhibiting distress at injustice, oppression, and the general badness of government ? (iii. 16, iv. 1 ff., v. 8, viii. 10, ix. 16, x. 5–7). (3) If it be supposed that the book portrays an aged penitent king, sorry for his idolatry and misuse of God's gifts, it must be replied that not one single note of repentance is discoverable. (4) The references to other kings (iv. 13–16, x. 16 f.) do not befit his pen. (5) i. 12 : ' I was king,' and the remarks in i. 16 and ii. 7, 9 concerning all the kings that were before him in Jerusalem, may perhaps (see Williams) be accommodated to the consistent identification of Solomon with Koheleth, but more likely they are inconsistent ; for he reigned until his death, and his father was the only one before him. Further, is it likely that the real Solomon would have spoken so indefinitely and unsympathetically with respect to his son as ii. 18 implies ? (6) In reality, the writer is no king ; the literary impersonation adopted soon wears thin. He is evidently a subject, much embittered, without patriotism ; one into whose soul, saddened by injustice, the iron of oppression has seared. Besides the passages in (2), mark also viii. 2, 9, x. 16–18, 20.

The next chapter will reveal his opinions and character. As to his *personal circumstances*, we are able to gather only a little for certain. Evidently, one of the Sages (xii. 11), and a man of culture and scholarship, he seems to have been somewhat of a traveller. Unless the mention of experiences only possible to rich men (ii. 1–11) is dramatic and literary, he must be thought of as wealthy. It may also be inferred that he was at least in advanced middle age, if not actually an old man, at the time he made his book ; for his search to find the chief good of life suggests many years of experiment and investigation, and apparently belongs to the distant past. The passage on old age (xi. 9–xii. 7) may indicate personal experience of failing powers of bodily strength and capacity for enjoyment, though too much stress will not be laid on this by those who remember similarities in Greek poetry. With more or less uncertainty it is conjectured that he was a high official, the head of a school, of high-priestly family, a physician, even a Sadducee.

D. R. Scott has called Koheleth ' an ego-maniac,' ' a mighty egoist ' ; but this is rather extravagant. One who writes in the first person, and using the name of the great Solomon as a literary vehicle for his words, could hardly have avoided the ' I ' of experience, and even self-commendation. Clearly he had suffered much, and known bitter disappointments, in spite of hard toil, probity, and ability. And this has left him with a biting sarcasm and more than a touch of cynicism. Withal he has the utmost sympathy for the oppressed and the victims of injustice.

Certainly he proves himself a seriously minded man, keenly interested in moral and religious questions. Tyler writes of his ' profound intellect,' and McNeile of his ' intense originality.' D. S. Margoliouth,[1] like the previously named scholar, in comparing Koheleth with Ben Sira, speaks of the former as ' the bold and

[1] *Expositor*, February 1908, pp. 118 ff.

original thinker,' and the latter as 'the paraphraser of texts taken from a sacred book.' On the other hand, Lukyn Williams challenges these opinions : Koheleth 'was not a profound thinker.' Certainly the evidence for Koheleth's activity as a collector and editor of the opinions of others tends to support this. Yet Koheleth must not be underrated. He was a real, if not a profound, thinker, and his work exhibits fine eclectic and reflective powers. And if the 'shepherd' of xii. 11 is, as is probable, an epithet of God, Koheleth claims to be one of those whose words come ultimately from God.

In *method* he was a 'collector of sentences' (xii. 11, R.V. marg.) ; xii. 9 f. is also perfectly clear : he was a painstaking gatherer of proverbs and wise opinions, one skilled in framing and editing them. A seeker, his investigations led him into circles where early Greek gnomic utterances were common talk. Such as interested his type of mind he gathered, and later worked them up into our book.

Koheleth is thoroughly in earnest. Far from being a scrap-heap of casual thoughts or occasional aphorisms without definite purpose, the *aim* of the book is intensely practical and didactic. He desired to record for the benefit of others the results of his experiments and search for suitable opinions, and in part to adapt for Hebrew readers some of the material of the early Greek Wisdom literature. The very selection of the matter adapted indicated his wish to express dissatisfaction with orthodox and traditional views concerning Providence and the perplexities of life. He has a distinct lesson he desires to convey to his readers. Unless we suppose, with Williams, that he died before he had drawn up his thoughts in order and arrived at clear decisions, it was evidently no part of his aim to produce a systematic, logically coherent, and orderly treatise. The general idea and meaning, however, of his work as a collector, and of his own personal reflections, are easily discerned.

IX. Relationship to Old and New Testaments

Our collector shows very few indications of quotation or adaptation of other parts of the Old Testament. Gen. iii. 19 (Eccles. iii. 20), Job i. 21 (v. 15), Deut. xxiii. 21 (v. 4), and 1 Kings xviii. 46 (vii. 20) may be reminiscent of earlier Sacred Scriptures. Much more doubtful are others adduced by various commentators : iii. 18 f. (Ps. xlix. 12), iv. 1 (Ps. lxxiii. 10), v. 1 (Ps. lxxiii. 17), v. 6 (Mal. ii. 7, iii. 1), vi. 3 (Job iii. 16), vii. 1 (Prov. xxii. 1), vii. 6 (Pss. lviii. 9, cxviii. 12), vii. 16–18 (Prov. iii. 7), vii. 14 (Job ii. 10), vii. 23 f. and viii. 17 (Job xi. 7–9), vii. 28 (Job ix. 3, xxxiii. 23), xi. 5 (Ps. cxxxix. 15), xiii. 7 (Gen. iii. 19), xii. 13 (Job xxviii. 28).

In the New Testament there are no verbal quotations. Reminiscences of the language may possibly be found, but these are more or less uncertain. The following, among others, have been brought forward : i. 2 (Rom. viii. 20), i. 2 f. (Jas. iv. 14), ii. 4, 18*b* (Luke xii. 16–21), v. 1 (Matt. vi. 7–9, Jas. i. 19), vi. 12 (Jas. iv. 14), vii. 18 (Matt. xxiii. 23), ix. 10 and xi. 18 (John ix. 4), ix. 11 (Rom. ix. 16), xi. 5 f. (John iii. 8), xii. 3, 5 (2 Cor. v. 1), xii. 14 (Rom. ii. 16, 2 Cor. v. 10), and i. 12–18, ii. 1–25 (Luke xii. 27). The subject-matter of our book was not such as to invite its use by the New Testament writers.

X. Style[1]

Not much needs to be added to what has been said in the sections on the Contents (I.) and Date (VII. 5). Professor D. S. Margoliouth judges certain of Koheleth's idioms not so much late as foreign Hebrew, and some of his expressions do seem to betray the influence of his sources. It is, however, well recognized that the book, in both style and matter, is different from any other Old Testament writing. ' His style has a stinging sarcasm, a tendency to epigram, a *moan* in it, which

[1] Barton, pp. 50 ff. ; McNeile, pp. 32 f.

is unique in Hebrew literature' (McNeile). 'His work is without a model' (Cheyne).

Occasionally the thought, when elevated, rises into poetical rhythm, and shows real poetical feeling (e.g. i. 2–11, xii. 1*b*–7). Yet Ewald's opinion that a genuine poetic inspiration pervades it throughout is hardly to be accepted. Rather, Koheleth is not a lyricist and not a literary artist. On the whole, the book is bald prose,[1] and not very classical Hebrew at that. It lacks charm, polish, poetic intensity, and imaginative flights. Koheleth does not soar. Cheyne's remark is worth quoting: 'It is partly because there is so little poetry in Ecclesiastes that there is so little Christianity.'

The point already mentioned as made by Williams and Cheyne must here be remembered. Did Koheleth, as they suppose, die before he had carried out his intention of properly arranging and giving a finish to his work? If so, the disjointedness and unfinished style after chapter ii. are easily understandable. On the other hand, Theognis, his main foreign source, exhibits similar characteristics of disorderliness; and, even though Koheleth had not the Greek work actually before him, but gained his information orally, his informers would hardly have given the proverbs an orderly arrangement as they passed them on to him.

Dr. F. C. Burkitt (*Journal of Theological Studies*, October 1921) suggests that the unsatisfactory and disconcerting style of our present book is due to its being a translation from an Aramaic original. He thinks it a most original work, and finds it difficult to believe that so careful and acute a thinker would have used 'the crabbed and unnatural lingo' of our Hebrew text. On this hypothesis the Aramaisms find suitable explanation. This is not impossible. Aramaic may have been, whether he was original or not, the language in which Koheleth thought, and perhaps even wrote. On the other hand is the opinion of Professor D. S.

[1] Barton, p. 50, opposes strongly theories of a metrical Koheleth.

Margoliouth[1] : 'There is a "curious felicity" about many of the aphorisms which render the hypothesis of translation unsatisfactory, and several of the idioms appear to indicate the influence of an Indo-Germanic rather than of another Semitic language.' He adds, in agreement with Driver : 'Perhaps, then, the Aramaic tendencies will be sufficiently accounted for by the hypothesis that the author *thought* in that language, though he wrote in another.'

XI. Text and Versions[2]

The Massoretic text preserves, on the whole, the original text faithfully. Fewer signs of corruption or alteration are apparent than is the case with the majority of the Old Testament writings. Of the versions, the Greek Septuagint is most important, and represents a text not essentially different from the Massoretic Hebrew. Where differences are found, the LXX is not usually superior. Most modern scholars (H. St. J. Thackeray, McNeile, Barton) think the translation the work of Aquila, a native of Pontus, a convert first to Christianity and then a proselyte to Judaism, who made it in the second quarter of the second century A.D. Williams thinks it better to attribute it to an earlier attempt at translation by one of the same Rabbinic school of thought. For the other less important versions the student must consult the standard commentaries.

[1] *Expositor*, February 1908, p. 120.

[2] Works already cited of Barton (pp. 7 ff.), McNeile (pp. 116 ff.), and Lukyn Williams (pp. 7 ff.).

Chapter IX

THE BOOK OF ECCLESIASTES

B.—THE TEACHING

Koheleth is, within the Bible, an isolated thinker. Certain fundamental Jewish ideas are not abandoned, and affinities with Proverbs and Job are plain ; yet the book stands apart from the ordinary religious development. In style and thought it has no biblical model, and is ' a portent in the Old Testament, and alien to the spirit of true Judaism ' (Cheyne).

(1) God

As with all Jews, Koheleth's thought of God was fundamental, and, indeed, most of the following pages might be contained under this heading. It is sufficient here to mark His creatorship (iii. 11, vii. 13, xii. 1 ?, &c.), and that all the happenings of human life are in His hands. All good things (ii. 24–6, iii. 13, v. 18 ff., vi. 2, ix. 7, xii. 7, 11), as well as the evil (i. 13, ii. 26, iii. 10 f., v. 6, vi. 2), are His gifts. The divine hand is in every occurrence (iii. 14, vii. 13 f., viii. 15, ix. 1 f., 9, xi. 5, &c.). Even man's oppression of man has been ordained by God (iii. 16, 18).

No man has mastery over his own life. He is not free : every action of his is preordained. Man is helpless in the unyielding grip of arbitrary Omnipotence, whose iron hold cannot be relaxed. This Power is resistless ; it is useless to contend with God, and even to complain is futile. Nothing is left but to bow before inevitable necessity (i. 15, iii. 1–8, 14, vi. 10–11, vii. 13–14, viii. 8, ix. 1, 7, 12, xi. 2–5). Koheleth had not

the Promethean nature of Job.[1] Nevertheless, it is denied that God is the primary author of moral evil. 'God made men upright, but they have sought out many contrivances' (vii. 29). Men and women are born good; evil is of their own doing.

(2) Human Ignorance

Koheleth is overwhelmed by man's intellectual limitations. He is ignorant of the future, unable to understand God's world and to fathom the purpose of His plan and work. Every action has its fixed time to which, if men can, they must adapt themselves; and there seems to be, to the eyes of Omniscience, a perfectly harmonious plan for them (iii. 11). But human wisdom has been so divinely veiled that it cannot discover this plan or know the proper times. Man walks blindfolded in a maze. He can aim at nothing clearly and definitely, and hence cannot order his life for the best. Undertakings are uncertain and chanceful. No key to the riddles of life is man allowed to find, though God has implanted within him the very instinct to search for the significance of things (i. 13, iii. 10). It is forbidden to penetrate to the knowledge vital to real happiness (i. 2–11, 18, iii. 11, vii. 14, 23 ff., viii. 7, 16 f, ix. 1, 12, x. 14, xi. 5). A preordained time for everything exists, but God 'has put ignorance [read עֶלֶם] in man's heart, so that he cannot find out the work that God does from beginning to end' (iii. 11). Good and bad have been so divinely mixed that nothing can be found out concerning the future (vii. 14). Wisdom is vanity (i. 17 f., ii. 13–15). Again and again is the hopeless 'Who knoweth?' or a similar question (ii. 19, iii. 21–2, vi. 12, viii. 7,

[1] 'Job raged; the Preacher only moans and moralizes. Job is an untamed eagle, dashing himself against the bars of his cage; the Preacher looks out with a lustreless eye on the glorious heavens, where, if he were free, he might soar. He knows it cannot be, and he ventures also to murmur some advice to men: Enjoy good, do not think' (v. 20) A. B. Davidson, *Enc. Biblica*, p. 1160).

x. 14) : 'Who knoweth what is good for man in his life, the number of the days of his vain life?' (vi. 12).

(3) Life Without a Goal

All things—races of men, the sun, the winds, the rivers, &c.—move along monotonously in a kind of endless cycle. Even nature travaileth along with man. 'All things are full of weariness.' There is a dreary sameness, an endless repetition, a weary round. Things tend to recur to a former condition. Nothing is new under the sun. Hence in such a closed circle no real progress or lasting gain is possible; accomplishment can register no advance. All history, all existence, is without purpose or goal (i. 2–11, iii. 15). Nature was a loveless mechanism, having nothing to produce joy or faith in God.

(4) Retribution and Reward

God treats wicked and righteous alike, or even gives the former prosperity and the latter adversity. He seems unconcerned with moral distinctions. The same event happens to wise man or fool, the good or the bad. The former gain no advantage over the others (ii. 14–16, vi. 8, ix. 2 f.). Wickedness is rewarded with power (iii. 16, iv. 1, viii. 10, 14). God heeds not the tears of the oppressed (iv. 1). Vain is it to follow piety; rewards are not bestowed in harmony with ability or merit (ix. 11 ff.). Rather a righteous man perishes in his righteousness and a wicked man prolongs his life in his evildoing (vii. 15). Righteous men are treated as the wicked ought to be, and the wicked as the righteous deserve (viii. 14). Such unjust dealings of Providence increase the evil and madness of the human heart (ix. 3).

Koheleth is not altogether consistent. But this is not surprising; indeed, rigid consistency is hardly to be expected in a gnomic collector; and, further, changing moods and contradictory ideas seem to find lodging-place in most of us. And so elsewhere he

teaches that wickedness will be punished on earth (ii. 26, v. 6, 8, vii. 26, viii. 12–13, x. 8 f.[1]), and righteousness rewarded by God (ii. 26, iii. 12, vii. 17, 26, viii. 5; viii. 12–13, xi. 1). Delay in dealing out justice encourages the wicked to imagine they can transgress with impunity (viii. 11).

(5) The Future Life

Even the immortality of remembrance is denied; death means total oblivion (i. 11, ii. 16, ix. 5 f.; cf. viii. 10). Koheleth had no faith in anything worth while after death; for iii. 17, xi. 9*c*, and xii. 14 are interpolations if they refer to an after-life. His is the old Hebrew view in its gloomiest form—not annihilation, but a hopeless, dreary existence in Sheol, the underworld; a state inactive, shadowy, barely conscious, without joy or interest, and one in which God had nothing to do. Lukyn Williams[2] believes that he hardly troubled himself, was not much concerned with the question of a future life. Yet this seems scarcely the case. At the time he wrote, the doctrine of individual immortality was rapidly gaining ground among his fellow Jews, and it seems more probable that he meant very definitely and even sarcastically to range himself against the growing belief as an idle speculation: 'Certainly his affirmations of the emptiness of the future life are many and pointed, and they stand, by their dispassionateness, in marked contrast with the passionate hopelessness of Job.'[3] The wise man dies as the fool; there is no remembrance of them for ever (ii. 14–16). 'The dead know not anything, neither have they any more a reward' (ix. 5). In the shadow-land of Sheol, love, hatred, envy, every human passion, has ceased; there is no more portion in the life on earth, the only one the

[1] If x. 8 f. is connected with x. 6 f., the meaning probably is that ruin follows the insolence attendant on the undue success of the mean.

[2] xxxvi., xlv. Cf., on Darius the Persian, *E. R. E.* ii. 452.

[3] Toy in *Enc. Biblica*, p. 5335.

writer knows (ix. 6). 'There is neither work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom, in Sheol, where thou goest' (ix. 10). Many are the days of darkness there (xi. 8). Death reduces good and bad to one level, irrespective of moral distinctions (ix. 2, vi. 6). And there is no respite from its approach (viii. 8), or return from Sheol (iii. 22). Man is no better than the beasts; both go to the same place (dust); both are of the earth and return to earth (iii. 18–20). Williams thinks that Koheleth is simply describing the state of the dead in relation to affairs of this world. They know nothing of what goes on here, nor have any share in its activities. He hardly troubled himself as to the existence in Sheol, apart from its negativeness in relation to things on earth. Probably iii. 17, xi. 9*c*, xii. 14, were added by a friend, and, if they represent his opinions, Koheleth held the doctrine of a future judgement. But the former view seems unduly to minimize the meaning of the passages.

Two passages claim further attention. 'Who knoweth the spirit of the sons of men, whether it goeth upward, and the spirit of the beast, whether it goeth downward to the earth?' (iii. 21). 'The dust shall return to the earth as it was, and the spirit shall return to God who gave it' (xii. 7). Williams unnecessarily regards the first passage as an interpolation. It may be a strong negation; at death the spirit of man and that of the beast do not take different directions. Most students think it a sceptical question: Who knows? No one. To affirm there is a difference is pure conjecture. No decision can be reached of either denial or affirmation. The second passage contradicts the first. Koheleth is in a less despondent mood. At death the human personality is dissolved into its original sources—the body to the earth and the spirit to the God who gave it—thus reversing the creative act of God (Gen. ii. 7).

What is meant by 'spirit' (*ruach*) and 'return to God'? Not self-conscious spirit, soul, personality, but the life-breath, the vital force, the principle of life

which God breathed into man (Gen. ii. 7). Ps. civ. 29 f. and Job. xxxiv. 14 are to be compared. God takes back to Himself the breath He had given, and thus undoes His creative activity. There is no thought of a self-conscious personality which returns to God as immortal, and surviving death, any more than Gen. ii. 7 must be regarded as proving its existence before birth. All that is meant is that at death God withdraws to Himself the vital breath. McNeile[1] writes that 'the words are valuable as showing how near Hebrew thought could approach to the Stoic tenet of the re-absorption of all beings into the Infinite Being.' But Koheleth is nothing of a pantheist. He does not hold any doctrine of re-absorption of the individual soul into the deity. No more can be obtained from the words than that the principle of vitality, His spirit of life, has been taken back by its Giver to Himself. 'All questions where this "spirit" goes when "taken away" are irrelevant. It goes nowhere; the "taking away" of it is merely the cessation of the divine influence of which it is the effect.'[2]

(6) Chance

As far as man sees, events happen by chance. 'The sons of men are a chance and the beasts are a chance' (iii. 19. מִקְרֶה, chance, accident, fortune). Cf. ii. 14 f., ix. 2 f. Often compared is the word of Solon to Croesus: 'Man is altogether a chance' (Herodotus i. 32). Note also the use of Koheleth in the Book of Wisdom (ii. 2): 'By mere chance were we born.' Success is not given to ability and merit; 'time and chance happeneth to them all' (ix. 11. פֶּגַע, that which happeneth, occurrence, chance, accident). But, of course, chance is not something independent of God; for all the events of life are

[1] p. 48.
[2] A. B. Davidson, *Enc. Biblica*, p. 1159. Cf. his *Old Testament Theology*, pp. 195 f.

regarded as wholly due to His will (iii. 11*b*, ix. 1, xi. 5, and Section 1).

(7) The Divine Government

As Koheleth marks all the anomalies of God's rule of the world his spirit becomes saddened. Yet he was too much of a Jew to be tempted to atheism. On occasions he seems to have acknowledged a moral order and design in the world (ii. 26, iii. 11, 14, 18, vii. 14, viii. 12, 17, xi. 5). He is God-fearing, and exhorts his readers to be the same (v. 1, 6 f., vii. 18, 26, viii. 2, 12, xii. 1 ?). Yet to him the rule of God is arbitrary (ii. 26). He is aloof from the life of men (v. 2). The conception of a deity to be approached only with the greatest care and caution (v. 2–6) could not be very comforting. Chapter v. 2 is the only reference to prayer, unless the Targum be correct in its interpretation of ix. 17. With such a God, prayer was, like other things, a vanity. It cannot be said that the divine justice is *directly* challenged, yet the indignation *is* there, lying very close to the surface of the book. As Koheleth cries out in pain and perplexity, the thought of God is ever in his mind. See such passages as ii. 15 ff., 21, iii. 9 f., iv. 1, v. 13–16, vi. 1–8, viii. 14, ix. 3, &c. Underlying the whole book is the assumption that the general order of the universe is not on righteous lines, that a universal crookedness is discernible. As already noted, it is thought harsh that, while God does see a moral order and a perfectly harmonious plan for men, yet their wisdom has been so divinely veiled that the plan is undiscoverable, and they cannot know what is the good, and how to order their lives for the best. And the matter is made more painful because God has set within men the instinct to search everything out, yet penetration into the secrets so vital to their welfare is deliberately denied. They are doomed to ignorance by an austere Being who holds them helpless in an iron grip. God-fearing Koheleth certainly was, but his fear was of ' the pale and cheerless ' order. It

could not inspire, only restrain. The atmosphere is one of doubt and fog. The belief in God is cold ; it possesses so little of essential spirit and content as to be extremely poor in religious meaning. Faith drags on the lower levels, it has been almost paralysed. Lacking is the passionate feeling after God as a gracious Being, and the warm, loving, confident, joyful hold upon Him so characteristic of the Hebrew psalmist or prophet. It is a bare, 'colourless monotheism,' without any of the vitality of personal intimacy. Inasmuch as the noblest religious conceptions have arisen less from the exercise of the speculative intellect than from close living fellowship with God, it was natural that such a thin theism should beget a thin comfortless religion. In truth, the only religion left to Koheleth was but a mere shadow of the ancestral faith of his childhood ; in both heart and head he is less a Jew than a Greek of the early gnomic type.

Nowhere does he use for God the personal name 'Yahweh,' but the title 'Elohim' or 'the Elohim.' Probably the best translation is 'deity,' or 'the deity.'[1] McNeile (p. 15), thinking of his original Koheleth before the *chasid* and *chakam* writers had made their additions, writes, '"The deity" is to him "nature," the sum-total of the irresistible and inscrutable forces which govern the world.' Yet, as McNeile himself allows, Koheleth's deity never became (for, after all, he was a Jew) regarded as impersonal. He was always more than nature, which He controlled.

Some scholars (e.g. Delitzsch, Cornill, Box, G. Kuhn), who retain iii. 17, xi. 9*c*, xii. 13–14 in the text, and others who admit the presence of interpolations (e.g. Lukyn Williams, E. Kautzsch, J. N. P. Smith), find in Ecclesiastes a much higher faith than has been outlined above. Delitzsch names it 'the Song of the Fear of God.' In spite of all difficulties and perplexities, Koheleth 'holds fast to his belief in God's loving care' (J. M. P. Smith). 'He does not really

[1] But cf. Hastings' *D. B.* v. 732 *n.*

doubt even the wisdom and justice of this God' (E. Kautzsch). Lukyn Williams, commenting on vii. 14, interprets Koheleth as meaning, 'God's dealings are beyond man's comprehension, but man can at least understand that God works equitably, and that there is no fault in Him.'[1] Cornill writes: 'Old Testament piety has nowhere enjoyed a greater triumph than in the book of Koheleth.' It is held that his faith did not suffer spiritual collapse. Rather amidst doubts, fears, and pessimistic moods he still held on to the faith of his fathers in God, and in the end comes to trust in His loving care and justice. Such a view does not seem consonant with the main burden of the book. It has been admitted that in certain moods the Jew in him was uppermost, and then he acknowledged the divine justice and moral design. Granting this, it seems still true that when the book is considered as a whole (cf. i. 2 and xii. 8), his final verdict and stable conviction are that experience does not reveal a God in whom one may hope and to whom one may feel love. Occasionally the sun breaks through, but the sky is usually gloomy and overcast.

(8) Koheleth a Pessimist

Ample justification exists for those who call his book pessimistic. Yet he was not an unqualified pessimist; for, as remarked in the last section, at times he did admit a moral order and purpose in the world. But, while occasionally we catch glimpses of a brighter faith, the whole ground-tone is that of melancholy. Think of the repeated: 'Vanity of vanities,' 'All is vanity and a striving after wind' (i. 2, 14, 17, ii. 11, 17, 22, 26, iii. 19, iv. 4, 6, 16, vi. 9, xii. 8). 'Vanity,' הֶבֶל, means 'breath,' 'vapour,' 'nothingness.' Burkitt[2] gives 'bubble.' The word is found about forty times in the book, while in the rest of the Old Testament there are only thirty-three instances.

[1] Cf. Burkitt in *Journal of Theological Studies*, October 1921, p. 24.
[2] Ibid., p. 26.

Everywhere are references to the 'nothingness' of everything. There is no real profit in anything. 'I have seen all the works that are done under the sun, and behold, all is vanity and a striving after wind' (i. 14). Human enterprises and endeavours are fruitless; even those things usually regarded as worth while are empty and ineffectual, vanity—labour, wisdom, skill, study, youth and life's prime, wealth and all the material things it brings, pleasure, wine, popularity, building, horticulture, fame, the future life, even piety itself (vii. 15, viii. 10, 14). The book opens and ends with a dirge (i. 2, xii. 8). Life has no meaning; it is an evil sickness, and religion fails to satisfy mind and heart. At the same time, Koheleth's pessimism is rather different from that of Theognis, his main foreign source. The Greek was obsessed with his own personal troubles and those of his political party. The Jew was more sympathetic, and the sweep of his interests was much wider. His outlook extended beyond himself and his own people, and contemplated humanity at large.

The weariness of life leads him to desire death. He hates life and all its labour (ii. 17, 18, 20). The death-day is better than the birth-day (vii. 1). He moans: 'And I congratulated the dead who have already died more than the living that are yet alive, and [I regarded] as happier than both of them him who had never been born, who has not seen the evil work which is done under the sun' (iv. 2 f; cf. Job iii. 3 f.; Jer. xx. 14–18). The melancholy, however, was not unlimited. It was for the man whose soul was not filled with good that non-existence was better than life (vi. 3 f.). In one mood he could write[1] that life was an evil business, and death the best, but, like many another man unburdening himself in saddened utterance, he shrank from actual death. While there is life there is hope; life under any conditions is better than Sheol: 'a living dog is better than a dead lion' (ix. 4). He had, after all, a positive horror of death and the decrepit old

[1] Cf. D. R. Scott's *Pessimism and Love*, pp. 70 f.

age (xi. 9–xii. 8) which is the prelude to it, and, with a contradictoriness which pessimistic literature not seldom has furnished, finds life, though so evil, still worth living. The thought of death begets a sigh for the loss it means : 'He [God] hath made everything beautiful in its time' (iii. 11) ; 'Truly the light is sweet, and it is good for the eyes to see the sun' (xi. 7).

A different mood, wonderfully revealing as to the overlaid Jewish feeling of our author, comes out in vii. 10. In i. 2–11 and iii. 15 (see Section 3) he writes that no progress and advance in accomplishment is possible ; history has no meaning or goal—a mere treadmill. But here he says : 'Say not thou, What is the cause that the former days were better than these ? for thou dost not ask in wisdom concerning this.' Old age is hardly the point here. The complaint of an old man pondering the days of his own prime is not being countered. Rather he is rebuking those who idealize the distant past to the disadvantage of the present. Probably Koheleth had in mind the Hesiodian doctrine of the successive ages of mankind—gold, silver, bronze, iron, &c.—with its underlying belief in the progressive deterioration of the human race. He combats this ; bad as things are, the world is not worse than it was. In such a word is revealed the essential Jew. Professor Butcher[1] has written that in Greek literature of classical times there is no trace of the thought that the human race as a whole, or any single people in it, is advancing towards a divinely appointed goal. On the other hand, the Hebrew mind was intensely optimistic. The thought of progress was never lost ; prophecy and apocalyptic both prove that even in the darkest days the conviction of the best days as ahead was consistently held. Now the deep melancholy of the Greek spirit had taken possession of Koheleth. He could calmly write, as we have seen, of the universe as having no goal, and men either individually or as a race having no destiny[2] ; nevertheless, the overlaid Jewish

[1] *Some Aspects of the Greek Genius*, p. 162. [2] Cf. *Enc. Biblica*, p. 1159.

spirit cannot be altogether smothered. Sometimes it will assert itself, as here ; the former days were not better than these ; the world is not growing worse, bad as it is. But such a mood was only transient, due to the momentary uprising of the native Hebrew faith, which he had not completely lost. His attitude on the whole is very un-Hebraic. Set in the midst of the literature of 'the most optimistic race in history,' 'a work like Ecclesiastes is a portent in the Old Testament, and alien to the spirit of true Judaism.'[1]

(9) Carpe Diem

The natural consequence of the conviction that life —bound as it was by arbitrary law, and ending as it must in dreaded Sheol—was a resultless and unprofitable business, is the recommendation : '*Carpe diem* ; get all the enjoyment you can as life goes on ; make the most of the present.' This is Koheleth's practical philosophy. Not, as McNeile well writes, that such is the *summum bonum* ; it is simply a *minimum malum*, fortunately allowed by God to man. The highest good is unattainable ; this is the best possible. 'A man hath no better thing under the sun than to eat and drink and be merry' (viii. 15). 'There is nothing better for a man than that he should eat and drink, and make his soul enjoy good in his labour' (ii. 24 ; cf. iii. 12 f., 22, v. 18 f., vii. 14, ix. 7–10, xi. 8–xii. 7). The picture of old age (xi. 8–xii. 7) is extremely cheerless, with nothing of the brightness to be found in some other parts of the Old Testament (Job xii. 12 ; Prov. xvi. 31, xx. 29 ; Ps. xcii. 14 ; Ben Sira xxvi. 17. But contrast Ps. lxxi. 9, 18). Then are come the evil days, and the years in which there is no pleasure. The dread of them casts a veritable shadow over life. The bright bloom of full-vigoured youth cannot last ; old age and death are inevitable ; therefore : 'Rejoice, O young man, in thy youth, and let thy heart cheer thee

[1] Cheyne, *Job and Solomon*, p. 251. Cf. John Owen's *Evenings with the Sceptics*, vol. i., p. 399.

in the days of thy youth, and walk in the ways of thine heart and in the sight of thine eyes. And remove vexation from thine heart, and put away evil from thy flesh ; for youth and the prime of life are vanity '—i.e. transitory, fleeting. Chapter xi. 9*c* is an interpolation.

Koheleth must not be misinterpreted. Excessive and senseless mirth did not appeal (ii. 2, vii. 4). Part of the enjoyment he favoured is to be found in the pleasure that comes from healthy, honest labour and toil. In spite of all the uncertainties and troubles of existence, and the dark days in Sheol to come, let man bravely take up the full burden of life's duties : ' All that thy hand finds to do, do it with thy might ; for there is no work, nor reckoning, nor knowledge, nor wisdom in Sheol, where thou art going ' (ix. 10 ; cf. xi. 4–6, ii. 10, 24, iii. 13, 22, iv. 5, v. 18, viii. 15, ix. 9, x. 18). He was no mere sensualist, although sensual enjoyments are included (ii. 8, ix. 9) among the objects of wisdom, and everything is viewed from the standpoint of personal happiness. Debauchery is not counselled (vii. 25 f.). It is altogether unjust to speak, as Hartman does, of the ' extreme licentiousness ' of the book. Cold and thin as his belief in God was, it yet kept him from any recommendation of riot and excess. Rather has he in mind the wise and temperate enjoyment of the simpler pleasures of the table and of marriage, coupled with earnest toil (ix. 7–10).[1] He is no expositor of libertinism. Enjoyments, regarded as the gifts of God (ii. 24, iii. 13, v. 19, ix. 7), were incapable of being debased by him.[2]

[1] Cf. Scott, op. cit., pp. 128 ff.

[2] Consistently with the Hebrew, which is without the article, ix. 9 may be translated : ' Enjoy life with a woman,' &c., and interpreted as a recommendation to licentious conduct with any woman who pleases. And verse 10 then exhorts to seek every possible means of gratification while the capacity for enjoyment lasts. So Ginsburg and Barton. It is evident that the author of the Book of Wisdom (ii. 9), as also Jerome, understood the passage of sensual enjoyment. If this interpretation be correct, and Koheleth is not using irony, he must stand lower in our estimation, and, indeed, then approaches the spirit of Theognis, his main foreign source.

(10) To Err is Human

Sad experience has taught him that, while a truly good woman did not exist, really good men were so rare as to be only one in a thousand (vii. 28). He goes further : ' Surely there is not a righteous man on earth, that doeth good and sinneth not ' (vii. 20 ; cf. viii. 11, ix. 18 ; 1 Kings viii. 46). But he emphatically denies that God is the primary author of evil. Men and women are born good. They plunge into evil by their own will (vii. 29).

(11) The Moral Effects of Adverse Circumstances

On the one hand, it is taught that the injustice of God's government demoralizes the character of the sufferer : ' Yea, also, the hearts of the sons of men are full of evil, and madness is in their hearts while they live ' (ix. 3). ' For oppression makes mad a wise man ' (vii. 7 ; the wise man is here the oppressed rather than the oppressor). On the other hand, affliction is recognized as not unproductive of good. It was seen that by the evil of life men were taught to fear God (iii. 14). Unrighteousness was in power, but it was so that God might sift men and show them, in spite of all their pride of intelligence, their true insignificance (iii. 16, 18 ; verse 17 an interpolation). Moreover, to suffer is to learn. Affliction adds beauty to the soul : ' through sadness of countenance it is well with the heart ' (vii. 2–4).

In respect to the divine bestowments of good and ill it is advised : When all is well, use your prosperity wisely ; be contented and cheerful ; and, when misfortune comes, bear it with patience and courage (vii. 14). Barton's interpretation of xi. 6 is excellent. Bravely do your duty early and late ; do not falter by reason of the chance which clings to all human undertakings ; bear all the losses which appear in a becoming spirit. In vii. 8 ff. is a warning against, like the fool, being vexed with the heaven-sent sufferings. Patiently and courageously endure them. So the Targum.

(12) Keep the Mean

An unexpected passage in Sacred Scripture is vii. 16–18 : ' Be not righteous over much ; neither make thyself overwise ; why shouldst thou destroy thyself? Be not overmuch wicked, nor be a fool ; why shouldst thou die before thy time? It is good that thou take hold of this, and that thou refrain not thy hand from that ; for he that feareth God goes along with both.' That is, give thyself wholly neither to righteousness nor wickedness, but preserve the just medium. ' This ' and ' that ' refer to the ' righteousness ' and ' wickedness ' of verses 16 and 17. Many interpreters[1] avoid the plain meaning of the words by regarding them as a warning against, on the one hand, the narrow asceticism of the excessive legalist and rigid pietist, and, on the other, against extreme licence. Koheleth is perfectly serious, not ironical, as Plumptre supposes. You may sin so long as you do so moderately. Avoid all extremes of folly or wisdom, piety or sin. Give attention to both, ever keeping the middle way. The Greek speaks here, not the native Jewish spirit. It is the atmosphere of the μηδὲν ἄγαν philosophy—' nothing in excess.' ' Righteousness ' has the legal meaning in v. 8 ; in iii. 16, vii. 15, 16, 20, viii. 14, ix. 1, 2, the significance is ethical and religious.

(13) Wisdom and Folly

Besides his theoretical and practical philosophy Koheleth had a regulative principle for conduct and mind in ' wisdom.'[2] Wisdom is cleverness, practical sagacity, shrewd insight and prudence, a religious and ethical quality as well as mental. It is the gift of God (ii. 26, xii. 11), the wise man being in His hands (ix. 1). Wisdom is in many ways profitable : A source of great power (vii. 19) ; better than warrior strength (ix. 13–16) ; superior to weapons of war (ix. 18) ; and excelling folly (ii. 12–14). Better is youth with wisdom than an

[1] e.g. Delitzsch, Williams, Martin. [2] *Enc. Biblica*, pp. 1156, 1159.

old and foolish king (iv. 13). The wise man's heart is in the house of mourning (vii. 4). His words combined with gentleness are more effective than the cries of an arch-fool (ix. 17). Like money, wisdom is a protection ; it is even more profitable since it preserves life (vii. 11–12). It enables its possessor to give a profitable reproof (vii. 5), to use gracious and favour-winning words (x. 12), to mind his own affairs (x. 2), to know the proper time for deeds and the sort of decision to make (viii. 5). It teaches how one may most intelligently reach success and direct one's strength and powers (x. 10 f., ii. 14, 21). It provides insight, transfigures the countenance, and removes any repellant harshness of face, giving it the gentle kindliness and brightness indicative of moral and intellectual refinement (viii. 1). The words of the wise stimulate to right activity, and are altogether trustworthy (xii. 11). The author had found it a guide and helper in his searchings and experiments into life (i. 13, ii. 3, 9, vii. 23), and praises his own possession of it (i. 16, ii. 3, 9, 15, xii. 9).

There was another side. The poor man's wisdom is despised (ix. 16). Wisdom does not provide bread (ix. 11). Oppression may turn wise into fool (vii. 7). Wisdom can be outweighed and spoilt by a little folly (x. 1). It may, in high places, be deposed by folly (x. 6). All application to the pursuit of it is but a striving after wind. In much wisdom and knowledge is only vexation and grievous sorrow (i. 17 f., ii. 18–23, xii. 12). Be not overwise (vii. 16). And, after all, wisdom in its true inwardness is impossible of attainment (vii. 23–5, viii. 16–17 ; cf. Section 2). Wise and fool meet the same end, and are likewise forgotten (ii. 14–17, vi. 8).

Folly is the opposite of wisdom. It is sometimes associated, as among the Stoics, with madness (i. 17, ii. 12 ; cf. ix. 3) ; it is madness and wickedness (vii. 25). The fool destroys himself by slothfulness (iv. 5), walks in darkness (ii. 14), lacks in sense, thinks everybody

else is a fool, and cannot mind his own business (x. 2–3). He is ignorant how to do the easiest thing (x. 15), and cannot even do evil efficiently (v. 1).[1] The fool often sins with his tongue. He is a boaster, talks of the future as if it were an open book before him. His mouth is filled with mischievous madness (x. 12–14). He talks too much and too hastily, even in prayer (v. 2 f.). And God has no interest or pleasure in the foolish people who deem they can bribe Him by resort to their favourite practice of hasty and easy vows (v. 4 ff.).

(14) Woman

Koheleth can in one mood recognize the value of a good wife (ix. 9). A slight emendation in xii. 1 gives: 'Remember thy wife in the days of thy youth.' Yet in vii. 26–8 is a bitter attack on women in general, and not merely the loose kind mentioned in Prov. ii. and vii. A good woman he had not found at all. 'I found a thing more bitter than death—a woman who is snares, and nets are her heart, and her hands fetters.' But Koheleth contradicts his source, Hesiod, who had written that woman was a 'sheer snare from which there is no escape for men': for he adds: 'He that is good before God shall escape from her, but a sinner shall be caught by her.' See also ii. 8.

(15) Social Questions

The prevalent reign of injustice filled him with despair. A profound sympathy with the poor and oppressed helped to spoil his own happiness. Wickedness was powerful in the law courts (iii. 16). The woes of the oppressed, for whom there was no comforter, so weighed upon his soul that he felt the dead to be better off than the living (iv. 1 ff.). Injustice made a wise man mad (vii. 7). With government-organized cruelty, and the State officials squeezing one another, no wonder the poor were crushed with exactions (v. 8).

[1] Ranston, *Ecclesiastes and the Early Greek Wisdom Literature*, pp. 26 f.

Koheleth is grieved to see the elevation of the unworthy to high positions and the natural rulers degraded to subordinate places (x. 5 ff.); while he knows the emptiness of mere wealth (v. 10–17). But he had no remedy to propose for social evils; indeed, his principles forbade a vision of social betterment. He can only acquiesce. Nothing is said of any activity of a self-denying and self-forgetful kind on behalf of one's fellow men.

With respect to the ruler, there must be obedience because of the oath sworn before God with respect to him (viii. 2). Do not enter into opposition with him; for he does as he wills (viii. 3). When he is angry, do not lose self-possession: 'for composure quiets great offences' (x. 4). He is not to be cursed, even in thought; his spies are everywhere (x. 20), and there is no escape from his demands (v. 9 ?). Evil is wrought by a young king surrounded by drunken princes, while happy is the land whose king is of noble birth and whose Court is temperate (x. 16–17). In iv. 13–16 is an obscure reference to a poor wise youth and an old and foolish monarch, possibly illustrating the vanity of popularity. See also vii. 19.

(16) Friendship

The true value of friends and partners in work and danger is well recognized (iv. 9–12). Yet vii. 28—'One man among a thousand I have found'—indicates a bitter experience of false friends, and ix. 1 seems to mean[1] that God keeps men in ignorance as to whether the attitude of their fellows will be that of love or hatred.

(17) Ingratitude

Koheleth remembers an instance of ingratitude when a poor man by his wisdom delivers a besieged city, yet no one remembered him (ix. 13–16). But he deliberately controverts the saying of Theognis that

[1] Ranston, op. cit., p. 39.

to benefit the mean was like sowing the sea. Such advice is short-sighted: 'Cast thy bread (=bread-corn, seed-corn) upon the waters, for thou shalt find it after many days' (xi. 1). Be generous; do not be narrow in your liberality. Sow even the thankless sea; be sure that sooner or later you will reap a reward. It is prudential advice, yet much higher than that of the Greek.

(18) Wealth

Riches are not always divinely bestowed where most deserved (ix. 11). The craving for them is insatiable (iv. 8, v. 10). They are hard to hold, and may be lost in some bad transaction (v. 14); a wealthy man may be utterly dispossessed of his means (vi. 1 f.; cf. x. 6 f.). Getting and keeping money brings sorrow and labour (ii. 18, iv. 6, 8, v. 13, 15–17). Increase in goods means increase in those who consume them. The owner gets no more than the sight of them, and, while the labourer can sleep, he himself cannot through care and worry (v. 10–12; cf. Xenophon's *Cyropaedia*, viii. 3, 40). No man can take it with him at death (ii. 18, iv. 8, v. 15). Yet it rules the world and meets all demands (x. 19). The wisdom of the poor man, just because he is poor, is despised (ix. 16). But money can be held too dearly. Better the modest income, with its freedom from anxiety, than riches with care and sleep-banishing sorrow (iv. 6, v. 11–12). Better than wealth is wisdom (vii. 11). Here, too, must be mentioned vi. 9, though the sweep of the thought is wider than just money: 'Better is the sight of the eyes than the wandering of the soul.'

(19) On the Use of the Tongue see Section 13. Add iii. 7: 'A time to keep silence and a time to speak.' Also note vii. 21 f.: 'Do not listen to gossip as to the faults of others, lest you hear your servant curse you just as you yourself have cursed others'

Anger is unwise (vii. 8 ff.).[1] Wine is good when used wisely and moderately, and not for drunkenness (ii. 3, ix. 7, x. 17, 19 ; cf. ii. 24, iii. 13, v. 18, viii. 15). One's Good Name or reputation is of more value than precious ointment (vii. 1). In Rivalry of a man with his neighbour all toil and the skilful arts have their origin (iv. 4).

(20) The Teaching of Ecclesiastes and the Revelation in Jesus Christ

(1) Koheleth has exercised a most remarkable fascination upon thinkers of all ages and temperaments. Many quotations from him are in common use. He is transparently sincere in the gathered thoughts he presents, and gives striking expression to certain world-weary moods and feelings recurrent in all periods of literature. Matthew Arnold thought the book one of the wisest and worst understood in the Bible, and John Wesley wrote : ' I never before had so clear a sight either of its meaning or the beauties of it. Neither did I imagine that the several parts of it were in so exquisite a manner connected together ; all tending to prove that grand truth—that there is no happiness out of God ' (*Journal*, January 2, 1777).

After reading the foregoing exposition of the teaching, it is natural to ask : What is the significance of it all for us ? It is part of Holy Writ. If the ' one Shepherd ' of xii. 11 be a reference to God, then Koheleth's words are regarded as coming ultimately from Him. Even the work of a collector, if the thoughts presented harmonize with his own deepest convictions, may have divine meaning for us.

It will be remembered that the book so shocked many devout spirits that only with difficulty, and after prolonged discussion, was it received, about A.D. 100, into the Old Testament Canon, and that the author

[1] See also Section 11 and Ranston, op. cit., pp. 46 ff.

of the Book of Wisdom set himself deliberately to controvert some of its opinions. Even Christian scholars, as Theodore of Mopsuestia, have seen in Koheleth a poor degree of inspiration. Some modern students have criticized the book severely: 'The last extreme of scepticism within the Hebrew philosophy' (De Wette); 'The Breviary of the most modern materialism, and of extreme licentiousness' (Hartmann). There is little justification for such severe judgement; nevertheless, Peake is not too strong in his words: 'It is not an imperfect Christianity that we find in it, but the negation of all that makes the gospel dear.'[1] Many of the sentiments are immeasurably removed from the spirit of Christianity. To accept its view of life would discourage all enthusiasm, and, indeed, cripple all strivings after the ideal; it would mean the paralysing of any impulse towards a genuine self-sacrificing altruism, and render hopeless all thought of individual or social betterment.

(2) Yet what other conclusions could be arrived at by one in Koheleth's position? The period was one of misgovernment; the pious were oppressed and the wicked prospered. Every experience of his had left him sensible of the fruitlessness of this life. He had no faith in a future life to redress the wrongs of this. Nature, too, had no message of divine benevolence as it had for the writer of Job; it spoke of iron law, deadly sameness, sad travail, the impossibility of progress and permanent gain. Remember he was not a Hebrew *saint*, a prophet or a psalmist with an experience of warm living faith and feeling after God. That sense of fellowship with Him which enabled these others—living often in similar circumstances to his—to make their daring ventures of faith, was not his. His temper was predominantly reflective and critical, and not given to trust where understanding is impossible. By a man so situated what else could be said?

[1] *The Problem of Suffering in the Old Testament*, p. 134.

(3) (*a*) Such a message is very fittingly found within the pages of Scripture. 'It puts the logic of a non-Christian position with tremendous force to all who feel keenly the misery of the world.'[1] Here, says Delitzsch, 'the Old Covenant digs its own grave.' 'The Old Testament religion sings its funeral song.' More than that; for Koheleth was not only a Hebrew, but the heir of the Greek gnomic spirit. The book illustrates the religious insolvency of a life which has only reflection on ordinary observation and experience to guide it. The facts of life are such as to often deny the goodness of the divine dealings, and, for those who cannot rise to trust in a God of love, Koheleth provides suitable expression. In showing the essential insufficiency of Jewish religion and Greek popular philosophy the book points forward to the necessity of a foundation for faith of a new kind. The very deficiencies clamour for something better. Every Old Testament book eloquently witnesses to its own function as a preparatory revelation, and none does this so loudly and clearly as Ecclesiastes. It thus proclaims the need of the Incarnation, the necessity for the authentic revelation of the loving heart of God in Jesus Christ to provide for human hearts the sure ground for faith that God is good and all is well. The book is thus a *negative apologia* for Christianity, revealing, as it does, the inadequacy of the older faiths and clearing the road for something infinitely better. It cannot be assumed that divine truth must of necessity be taught in positive and direct fashion. The need for Jesus and His significance may be brought home in more ways than one. As one reads the book the whole nature revolts against many of the conclusions: Life is surely not a resultless treadmill; it must somehow be full of purpose. All labour cannot be in vain; something ought to endure. Work, study, recreation, friends, wisdom, goodness—such as these should bring real happiness. Nature must have a meaning intelligible

[1] Peake, p. 135.

to man. God cannot be really unkind and arbitrary in His dealings with us; we want One who is an intimate friend. Death is not the end; life and immortality must be brought to light. A book which rouses such protests justifies its place in the Canon; it proclaims from the housetops the need for the faith guaranteed by Jesus that love rules in the universe of men and nature.

(*b*) The book proves the bankruptcy of mere materialism. Life, apart from the satisfaction which comes through Christ, is vanity and vexation of spirit. In no merely earthly object, in none of the things ordinarily accepted as the chief goods of life, can enduring and tranquil satisfaction be found. Jesus alone can turn an otherwise profitless existence into life of permanent worth. He only can bring about the needed change in values which makes it no longer vanity and nothingness. (*c*) Further, art and science are no substitutes for a genuine religious experience. One may have the highest culture and the most varied experiential knowledge of life and still fail to reach a satisfactory solution to its problems. Some much greater and more penetrating, all-embracing and deeper-based good than that of the highest possible intellectual wisdom is needed by man for his true welfare. In spite of its wonders and usefulness, if he have nothing more, it ever leaves the feeling of failure to grasp reality, a sense of questions unanswered. Intellect requires the revelation in Christ.

(*d*) Koheleth had no doctrine of immortality. And no book so strikingly proves the necessity of it. It cries out, in the reiteration of 'vanity,' that an earthly life alone is not only totally inadequate for such a being as man, but also unworthy of God who made him. Apart from it, man is no better than the beast, his life is without final significance and permanent gain, and the workings of the universe irrational and immoral. All points to the imperative necessity of One who 'abolished death

and brought life and incorruption to light through the gospel' (2 Tim. i. 10).

(*e*) Again, by bringing such a book into the Canon it is shown that the frank expression of doubts and reasons against faith need not be devil-born, but of the divine Spirit. Koheleth faced the facts as he saw them. He was candid, and did not gloss the evils as he knew them. A doctrine based on authority was not acceptable. We ought to be thankful that in Sacred Writ a place has been found for sceptical questionings and despondent sighings.[1] Would the Bible have truly reflected life had these been ignored? 'A sceptical creed did not keep Koheleth out of the Sacred Canon; an imperfect faith will not keep a man out of the Kingdom. God pardons mistaken thinking as well as what we call our sins.'[2]

(*f*) Further, we are warned against a flimsy and superficial optimism. To shut our eyes to the patent facts of sorrow everywhere, to ignore the care and trouble which weighs heavily upon so large a part of mankind, and to cry with unthinking heart that 'all is well,' is not so pleasing to God as is sometimes thought. That is blindness, not a robust faith. All Christians must be optimists, but true Christian optimism is perfectly consistent with, and, indeed, conditioned upon, a frank recognition that life is not a child's holiday or a youth's dance in a rose-garden to the sound of flutes. That Koheleth is in the Sacred Canon reminds us of the existence of unpleasant facts which are to be squarely faced by one deeming himself to be truly religious. (*g*) Finally, legitimate enjoyment is not to be ignored. Simple material pleasure in moderation has a part to play in every full-orbed life. Piety and self-mortification are not necessarily associates. In such enjoyments as are the gifts of God man meets Him and feels His favour.[3] Had the

[1] Cf. Dean Bradley's *Lectures on Ecclesiastes*, p. 39.
[2] Scott, *Pessimism and Love*, p. 25.
[3] *Enc. Biblica*, p. 1157.

Scriptures failed to find a place for a measure of enjoyment they would have forgotten a very real section of man's life. Asceticism, in and for itself, is not a virtue in the law of God. Koheleth's practical philosophy once more proves the broad-based common sense of the Bible.

INDEX

Aeschylus, 105
Agur, 84
Ahikar, 40, 248 f.
Amen-em-ope, 41 ff., 101, 240 f.
Angelology, 127, 144, 181
Anger, 64, 298
Arabic literature, 40, 106
Aramaic papyrus, 40, 248 f.
Archilochus, 255
Aristotle, 253

Babylonian literature, 40, 79, 101, 106, 189, 241 f., 249 f.
Baruch, 11
Bildad and his teaching, 121, 140
Bribery, 66
Buddhism, 106, 252

Carpe diem, 240, 242, 290
Chance, 284
Children and parents, 72 ff.
Christ and Job, 184, 186
Christ and Wisdom, 81
Christ, Ecclesiastes a negative apologia for, 298
Confucius, 101
Conscience, the individual, 85, 168
Courage, 94

Daniel, 189
Death, longing for, 240, 262, 288
Diagoras of Melos, 159
Discipline, 74
Doubt, 302
Drunkenness, 63, 298

Ecclesiastes, 188, 233 ff.
  Authorship, 272 f.
  Canonicity, 235 f.
  Composition, theories of, 265 f.
  Contents, 232
  Date, 269 f.
  Integrity, 265 f.
Ecclesiastes (*cont.*) :
  Relation to Ahikar, 248 f.
    to Babylonian literature, 241 ff.
    to Egyptian literature, 239 f.
    to Greek literature, 252 ff.
    to Old and New Testaments, 276
    to Sirach or Ecclesiasticus, 237
    to Wisdom of Solomon, 238
  Style, 271, 276
  Teaching of, 279 f.
  Text and versions, 278
  Title, 233 f.
Ecclesiasticus, 11, 22 f., 25, 54, 71, 235, 237, 270
Edom, 106
Education, 72 ff.
Egyptian thought, 41 ff., 106, 239 f.
Elihu and his teaching, 115 f., 142 f., 181
Eliphaz and his teaching, 139 f.
Enjoyment, legitimate, 302 f.
Epicureans, 254
Ezekiel, 188

Faithfulness, 67
Fools and folly, 76, 293
Forgiveness of injuries, 65, 69
Friendship, 67, 296

Generosity, 67, 297
Gluttony, 63
God, doctrine of, in Ecclesiastes, 278 f., 285 f.
  Elihu, 145
  Job, 133 ff., 151 ff., 172 f., 180
  Proverbs, 82 ff.
  Three friends, 135 ff., 147 ff., 172
  Yahweh's speeches, 173 f.
Greeks, 25 f., 80, 105 f., 133, 189, 252 ff.

Habakkuk, 126, 189
Harper, Egyptian Lay of the, 239
Heraclitus, 177, 253
Hesiod, 257 f.
Hosea, 188, 189

Idleness, 64
Ignorance, human, 242 f., 280
Immortality, 89 f., 127, 160, 186, 245, 282 f., 301
Industry, 64
Ingratitude, 296
Inspiration, 28 f., 145, 230 f., 298
Isaiah, Deutero-, 127, 129, 188
Isocrates, 101

Jeremiah, 129, 189
Job, 102 ff.
  And New Testament, 186
  Authorship, 131
  Canon, 103
  Chaps. xxiv.–xxviii., 119 ff.
  Chaps. xxix.–xxxi., 124
  Contents, 103
  Date, 125 ff.
  Debate with the Three, 135 ff., 143, 147
  Elihu section, 115 f., 142 f.
  Ethical ideals, 184 ff.
  Foreign influence in, 105 ff.
  History or invention, 103
  Integrity, 110 ff.
  Literary form, 108
  Personification of Israel?, 126, 167, 171
  Prologue and epilogue, 110 ff., 169 ff.
  Speeches of Yahweh, 118 ff., 173 f.
  Teaching of, 133 ff.
  Text and versions, 109 f.

Ke'gemni, 41
Khekheperre-Sonbu, 240
Kindness, 67
King, 70, 249
Knowledge and virtue, 87 f.

Lao-Tze, 101
Life resultless, 244, 281, 289
Logos, 81
Love, 69
Love, sex, 213 f., 229 ff.

Maccabees (4), 11
Malachi, 129, 188
Man, doctrine of, 85, 176, 183
Materialism, 301
Mean, Keep the, 293
Misanthrope, Egyptian Dialogue of a, 106, 240
Mischief-maker, 64
Mystic love poetry of East, 217 f.

Nature, 174 ff.

Old age, 70
Optimism, 302

Parents and children, 72 ff.
Paul, 81
Pessimism, 239 ff., 258 ff., 287 f.
Philosophy, Hebrew, 26, 95
Phokylidea, 256
Pirke Aboth, 11
Plato, 105
Poverty and the poor, 61
Pride, 65, 147
Prophecy and the prophets, 15, 18 ff., 24, 51, 55
Proverbs, 38 f., 100 f.
Proverbs, the Book of, 31 ff., 129
  Authorship, 47 ff.
  Canonicity, 58
  Chronological arrangement, 48 f.
  Contents, 31 f.
  Criticism of teaching of, 91 ff.
  Dates, 49 ff.
  Foreign influence upon, 40 ff., 79
  National elements lacking, 91
  New Testament, use in, 59
  Teaching of, 61 ff.
  Text and versions, 58 f.
  Title, 38
  Value of, 97 f.
  Vocabulary, 46
Psalms, 11, 128
Ptah-hotep, 41, 240
Purity, 69
Pyrrho, 253

Revelation, 28 f., 92, 230 f., 298 f.
Rewards and punishments, 88, 95, 281

Righteousness, 69, 184
Robbery, 61

Satan, 127, 169 f., 182, 184
Scorners, 65
Scribes, 13
Servant of Yahweh, 129, 188
Simonides of Ceos, 256
Sin, 85, 149, 183, 292
Slaves, 62, 185
Social questions, 185, 295
Solomon, 47, 55, 273
Solomon, Odes of, 11, 81, 226
Song of Songs, 190 ff., 228 f.
  As literature, 227
  Authorship, 225 f.
  Canonicity, 219 f.
  Date, 222
  Foreign influence on, 198 ff., 202 ff., 222
  New Testament, relation to, 226
  Odes of Solomon, relation to, 226
  Teaching of, 229 f.
  Text, 227
  Theories of interpretation:
    Adonis-liturgy theory, 202 ff., 229
    Allegorical theory, 209 ff.
    Collection of songs theories, 198 ff.
    Dramatic theories, 191 ff.
    Typical interpretation theory, 215 ff., 229
  Title, 190 f.
Sophocles, 177
Soul, pre-existence of, 183
Spirit, 283 f.
Spirit of God, 81, 144 f.
State, 70
Stoics, 254
Suffering:
  Demoralizing to character, 292
  Disciplinary, 140, 142 ff., 189
  Parents' sin, due to, 137, 189
Suffering (*cont.*):
  Preventive, 144
  Punitive, 135 f., 143
  Sifts good from bad, 292
  Test of disinterested goodness, 169 f.
  To be borne with courage, 292
  Vicarious, 129, 170, 188
Suffering, problem of:
  In Ecclesiastes, 279 ff.
  In Egypt and Babylon, 239 ff.
  In Greece, 253 ff.
  In Job, 133 ff., 107, 169 ff.
  In Old Testament, 189 f.
  In Proverbs, 89 f., 126, 188
Suretyship, 68

Tabi-utul-Bel, 107 ff.
Temptation, 69
Theocritus, 222
Theognis, 259 ff.
Tongue, good and bad use of, 66, 245, 249, 297
Two Brothers, Tale of, 41

Unchastity, 64, 71 f.

Virtue and knowledge, 87 f.

Wealth, 62, 297
Wisdom, 14 f., 72 f., 75, 95, 293
Wisdom, divine, 75 ff.
Wisdom in Job, 179
Wisdom Literature, 11 ff.
Wisdom Literature, criticism of, 27 f., 91 f.
Wisdom of Solomon, 11, 238
Wise Men, 13 ff., 19 f., 73 f.
Woman, 71 f., 73, 185, 244, 258, 295

Xenophanes, 159, 253

Zophar and his teaching, 121 f., 141

96495